

JOINTNESS IN 1780 CHARLESTON AND 1861-1865 CHARLESTON

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
Military History

by

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

JOINTNESS IN 1780 CHARLESTON AND 1861-1865 CHARLESTON, by LCDR John C. Campbell, 144 pages.

Jointness between army and naval forces has been the focus of many historical studies. Yet, it is often difficult to determine how effective jointness was in accomplishing the required mission. Would the outcome have been the same if the forces operated more jointly? To help resolve this problem, this research focuses on a comparison and analysis between the jointness in the successful siege of Charleston by the British in 1780, and the unsuccessful siege of Charleston by the Union in 1861-1865. This research examines what role jointness played in the successful and failed sieges of Charleston during the two time periods. Charleston's geography and fortifications played a key role in necessitating the need for forces to operate jointly. The effect of battle command and centers of gravity in relation to how forces operate jointly is also discussed. This research serves as a historical case study to help better understand the importance of jointness.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Jointness between army and naval forces has been the focus of many historical studies. Yet, it is often difficult to determine how effective jointness was in accomplishing the required mission. Would the outcome have been the same if the forces operated more jointly? To help resolve this problem, this research will focus on a comparison and analysis between the jointness in the successful siege of Charleston by the British in 1780, and the unsuccessful siege of Charleston by the Union in 1861-1865. This research will also attempt to determine what role jointness played in the successful and failed sieges of Charleston during the two time periods. It will also look at whether specific historical circumstances during similar operational goals (capture of Charleston) affect the ability of forces to operate jointly.

Proposed Research Questions

Within one hundred years Charleston experienced two different sieges using naval and army forces with dissimilar outcomes. The overriding question is: Did joint operations play a more significant role in 1780 Charleston than they did in 1861-1865 Charleston, and if so what effect did they have? There are several subordinate questions, which include: How did jointness or the lack thereof contribute to the successful siege of Charleston in 1780 by the British? How did jointness or lack thereof contribute to the failure of the Union to capture Charleston in 1861-1865? Did jointness in Confederate forces also play a role in the Union's unsuccessful siege of Charleston? What were the differences and similarities between these joint operations, and what effect did they have

on the final outcome? Did any particular circumstances or operational situations contribute to the differences in the two sieges?

To answer these questions, this thesis proposes that the difference in outcomes in the successful siege of Charleston in 1780, and the unsuccessful attempt by the Union in 1860-1865 was mainly due to the effectiveness of joint operations. The ability of naval and army forces to act effectively together was pivotal in overcoming the strong defenses around Charleston harbor. It is also suggested that both a decisive land and naval campaign was required to take control of the city. Moreover, it is proposed that only through coordinated joint planning with sufficient commitment by both army and naval forces could such a campaign occur. This is shown through the initial failure of the British naval forces in 1776, and through failed attempts by Admiral Du Pont in the Civil War to capture Charleston.

Key Definitions and Concepts

There are several key concepts that must be clearly defined and understood. First, joint is defined in the *U.S. Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* as “activities, operations, organizations, etc., in which elements of two or more Military Departments participate”¹ In other words, joint means the effective operation and participation of two or more military services, such as army and naval forces. Joint warfare is defined “as team warfare” requiring the integration and synchronized application of all appropriate military capabilities; the synergy that results maximizes combat capability in unified action.² When the word jointness is used in this thesis, it refers to the ability of the naval and land forces to act jointly, and to effectively employ joint warfare.

Overview

During two different periods in American history, Charleston was the focal point of a siege. In the American Revolution, British naval and army forces were able to successfully take control of Charleston. In the other case, Union naval and army forces were unable to capture Charleston during the Civil War until 1865 when General Sherman marched up from Georgia. On the surface it would appear that there is little similarity in the two time periods in which different forces were fighting with dissimilar objectives. The North was fighting a civil war to prevent the South from seceding. The British, on the other hand, were fighting a war to maintain their American colonies. There were differences in technology, organization, and sizes of the military forces involved in the two conflicts. However, a more in-depth look reveals a similar situation in which a heavily fortified Charleston was attacked by outside forces seeking to gain control of a strategic port. In both cases, Charleston's geography and defenses presented a formidable challenge to the attacking forces. Likewise, in both conflicts Charleston was regarded as a key political prize to break the will of the people defending it. Charleston, for example, is often recognized as the starting point of both wars. Due to these similarities, Charleston is the perfect historical model in which to examine the causes that lead to the success and failure of these two different siege attempts.

The successful British capture of Charleston in 1780 can be traced to an effective joint operation between naval and army forces. General Sir Henry Clinton, who commanded the army forces, and Admiral Marriot Arbuthnot, who commanded the naval forces, were able to work together to establish a well-coordinated plan using both forces to take Charleston.³ This plan included combined amphibious operations, naval

bombardment of Charleston harbor, feint operations using army forces, utilization of inland waterway systems from Savannah, coordination of re-enforcements, and naval planning to bring transports carrying troops to the operational area. Through this joint coordination of large numbers of army and naval assets, the British were able to bombard Charleston by land and sea leading to the unconditional surrender of the city. A contributing factor to the British success is the failure of American naval and army forces to effectively coordinate firepower to slow the British advance. The effective utilization of joint forces by the British was key to this victory.

During the Civil War, Federal forces, on the other hand, were not as effective as the British had been in joint operations. The United States Navy had tried unsuccessfully several times to take the port using ships. Like the British before them in 1776, Union naval ships alone could not counter the harbor defenses. The use of improved naval technology by the North could not overcome the defenses of the port. Their ironclad ships and larger naval guns were met by increased harbor defenses and torpedoes / mines. Rear Admiral Samuel Du Pont, who was commander of the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron, recognized the difficulty in attacking the heavily fortified port without coordinated army forces. He advocated a joint approach to the capture of Charleston. Yet, despite these failures, Union forces could never develop an effective joint plan that had the necessary elements and coordination to capture Charleston. In 1863 Rear Admiral John Dahlgren, who replaced Du Pont, conducted a limited joint operation with Major General Quincy Adams Gillmore. This led to the capture of Fort Wagner on Morris Island; however, it produced few other results. The inability of the Federal army and naval forces to operate jointly impeded the capture of Charleston. Effectively utilizing the

strengths of both land and sea forces, the British in 1780 were able to force the surrender of Charleston. The North, lacking an effective joint sea-land operation, was really only able to attack directly the harbor defenses, which as the British had seen in 1776 were difficult to overcome. Additionally, while the Union was unable to operate jointly, the Confederates, on the other hand, were able to significantly increase the effectiveness of their own defenses by coordinating their weak naval forces with their army and shore defenses. In this view, the Confederates were able to increase their firepower by taking a more joint view of their limited resources.

Outline of Thesis Chapters

This thesis is divided into five distinct chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction, which lays out the overall purpose and argument for the importance of jointness in the capture of Charleston. Next, in Chapter 2 Charleston's geography and defenses are discussed to show the necessity of having joint army and navy forces in order to conduct a successful siege. Chapter 3 analyzes the British successful siege in 1780, and examines jointness between British army and naval forces. The Union's unsuccessful siege and inability to act jointly with naval and army forces is examined in Chapter 4. Lastly, Chapter 5 is the conclusion and final analysis of the question of jointness in affecting the successful siege of Charleston.

¹Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 1-02 - Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, 12 April 2001), 275.

²Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 1 - Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 14 Nov 2001), vii.

³Henry Clinton, *The American Rebellion: Sir Henry Clinton's narrative of his campaigns, 1775-1782, with an appendix of original documents*, ed. William B. Willcox (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 114-120.; John A. Tilley, *The British Navy and the American Revolution* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 157-172.

CHAPTER 2

GEOGRAPHY

Geography Introduction

According to the U.S. Army's *Operations* (FM 3-0) manual, "analysis of terrain and weather helps commanders determine observation and fields of fire, avenues of approach, key terrain, obstacles and movement, and cover and concealment."¹ Moreover, this manual also states: "to find tactical advantages, commanders and staffs analyze and compare the limitations of the environment on friendly, enemy, and neutral forces."² Therefore, an understanding and effective utilization of the geography is critical for most battles. It is proposed that Charleston's geography played a key role in necessitating the need for joint army and naval forces in order to siege the city. To support the above supposition, it is necessary to develop a broadly defined description and battlefield visualization of the local terrain, an analysis of the possible attack approaches and axes of advance, and an understanding of the historical progression of defensive arrangements.

To support the analysis of the geography, this chapter is divided into four different sections, which build upon each other. The overall arching framework for this chapter is to progress from a broad introduction of the area's geography to a more comprehensive analysis of its effect. The first section is a broad description of the local terrain without any reference to man-made fortifications or defenses. This section is important in that it sets the stage for a more in depth examination of the geography. The next section goes into even greater detail, and discusses the various axes of advance into Charleston. Each axis is examined to provide a better understanding of the various approach limitations and difficulties. As in the first section, this analysis is done without

any reference to man-made fortifications. With an understanding of the terrain and axes of advance, the third section discusses the historical progression of man-made defensive arrangements from 1775 to 1865. This section is important in that it shows how Charleston's defenders used fortifications, batteries, and other man-made defenses to not only improve their natural geographic advantages, but to resolve any defensive shortfalls, which were discussed in section one and two. Additionally, this section traces the historical defensive concepts, which helped dictate where various fortifications were placed at that time. The last section ties the geography and fortifications together to emphasize the difficulty in attacking Charleston without a joint force, which is able to work together to overcome the difficulties imposed by the geographic situation. To understand the role that Charleston's geography played in necessitating jointness, a visualization of the area combined with an understanding of the development of the city's historical defenses is critical.

Charleston's Terrain Description

Before a more detailed analysis is done on the geography, a very basic description of the Charleston area is crucial to the development of an accurate battlefield visualization of the area. The best manner in which to visualize the area is to start from the Atlantic Ocean and move inland. Offshore in the Atlantic Ocean there are numerous sand bars that are almost parallel to the coastline. Most of these sand bars are submerged, and difficult to locate visually; however, many are so close to the surface that they are visible during low tides. The majority of these sand bars are approximately one to three miles from the coastline. The channel markers for entering into Charleston start many miles out to sea to ensure that ships are well within the dredged channels, and do not run

aground. Although dredging has removed many of these sand bars in the port area itself, they were a major terrain factor to be considered during the Revolutionary War, and they severely limited ship approaches during the Civil War. Looking further out to sea and beyond the sand bars, the Atlantic Ocean drops off fairly rapidly, and is easy to navigate. The Gulf Stream, which has a fairly strong oceanic current, also runs reasonably close to shore. Moving inland from the sand bars, a barrier island and coastal beach environment exists. The barrier islands are constantly being changed and modified as the ocean currents move the sand and erode the beach. The beaches, themselves, are fairly wide and flat, and are composed mostly of sand. Therefore, there are few cliffs and rocky areas along the coastline. Depending on the season, the surf on the beaches is normally moderate with waves gently washing up on the relatively flat beaches. Behind the beaches are dunes, which lead into a tidal marsh environment. Throughout the tidal marshes, there are numerous inlets and waterways. It is these inlets and marshes that further divide the area into numerous small islands. Behind the marshes, the terrain changes to freshwater swamps and some dry grassy areas. Throughout the area, an intricate river system drains into the Atlantic Ocean. Moving further inland past Charleston, the topography remains just above sea level with few ridges or hills to act as cover. It is for this reason that the area has been called the “low country.” Figure 1, which is shown on the next page, is a U.S. Geological topographic map of the Charleston area. Although Figure 1 is a current topographic map, most of the geographic features have not significantly changed over time. The only significant terrain change, besides a slight decrease in marsh areas, is the intra-coastal waterway, which can be seen above the southern islands (located on the far right middle section of Figure 1).

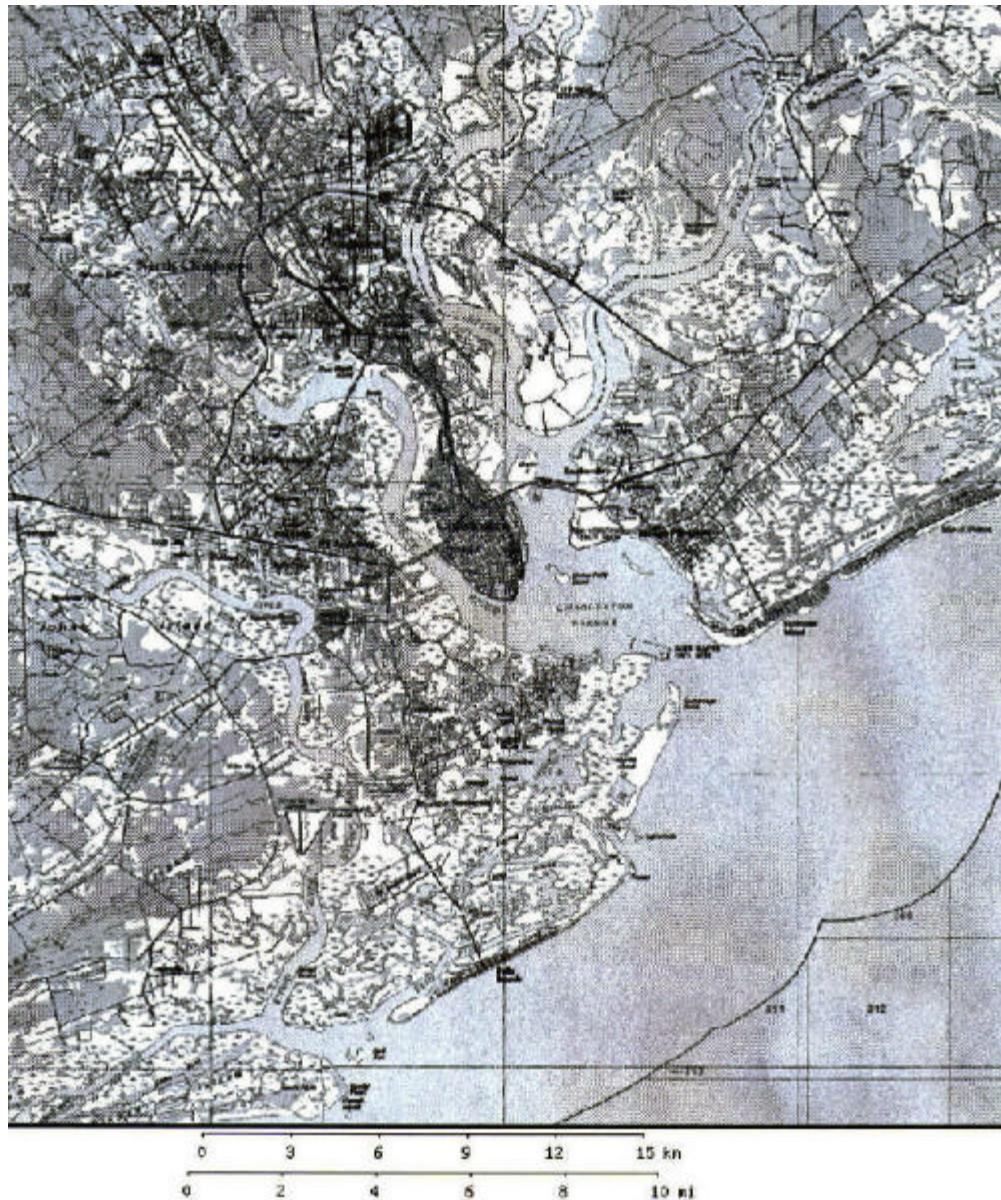


Figure 1. Overall Topographic Map of Charleston Area

Source: Topographic Map: *Charleston Quadrangle*. U.S. Geological Survey. Furnished through Topozone Maps a la Cart, Inc., 2003.

Besides a general description of the terrain, a detailed understanding of the city of Charleston is also necessary. Charleston is a rather unique city in that its historic center is surrounded by water on all but one side. The Ashley River on the south, Charleston's

harbor near the eastern tip, and the Cooper River and Wando River to the north surround the city. This enables Charleston to have a “boot” shape similar to Italy. The center of the city is situated at the eastern tip of this “boot.” The “boot” itself is about two miles in diameter, and only five miles long. Charleston’s “boot” shape, and its surrounding rivers can clearly be seen in Figure 1. The city’s historical center has always been located at the tip of the “boot.” Docks, pier facilities, and local government offices have also been historically located near this center. The city’s streets basically follow the city’s “boot” shape with waterfront streets following the rivers, and others spanning outward in an almost grid system. The waterfront streets form what is known as the “battery” along the Cooper River and harbor areas.

The intricate river system is another important characteristic of the Charleston area. As shown in Figure 1, the Cooper River and Wando River converge on the northern side of Charleston, and empty into Charleston’s harbor. Both the Cooper River and Wando Rivers are fairly large rivers in that they are approximately one-half mile across in the Charleston area. Additionally, both of these rivers are large enough and deep enough to allow deep draft military and commercial vessels to go further up river. The Charleston U.S. Naval Station, for example, which is located on the Cooper River, is about five miles further past downtown Charleston. Likewise, the U.S. Naval Weapons Station, which is also located on the Cooper River, is located another fifteen miles further upriver. Although the Cooper River has been dredged in recent years to accommodate larger modern merchants and warships, it was still able to handle most military and commercial shipping during the Civil War and the Revolutionary War.

In addition to the Cooper and Wando Rivers, there are also two other major river systems, which are the Ashley River and the Stono River. First, on the southern side of Charleston, there is the Ashley River, which also empties into Charleston's harbor. Although not as wide or deep as the Cooper and Wando Rivers, the Ashley River will allow some military and commercial vessels, and is extremely difficult to cross without the use of bridges or barges. Another major river is the Stono River, which is located to the west of Charleston. The Stono River flows north to south and empties into the Atlantic Ocean. The entrance to the Stono River is shown on the bottom left hand corner of Figure 1. There are also numerous small creeks, channels and inlets, such as Lighthouse Inlet, which is located near the entrance of Charleston's harbor. All of the rivers, creeks, and streams run basically west to east, and finally drain into the Atlantic Ocean.

Charleston's harbor is also another key terrain geographic feature. The harbor is deep enough to allow large merchants to enter Charleston from the Atlantic, and dock pier-side in the city. The actual harbor entrance is less than one mile across, with most of that area too shallow to allow deep draft vessels to enter. A very restrictive entrance channel must be used when entering port. The sea and anchor detail is extremely difficult for ships entering into port. Of particular concern are currents and tidal changes, which have caused many inexperienced captains to run their ships aground. Usually ships entering port have pilots from the local area onboard to ensure ship safety and prevent grounding. The harbor is approximately five miles long and about four miles at the widest point. Since before the Revolutionary War, the harbor has been used as a deep draft port for merchant vessels. Charleston was built as a commercial center to take

advantage of this natural port. The harbor is well protected from ocean currents allowing a safe shelter for ships; however, as mentioned, tides and currents play a major role in entering port.

Another important terrain feature is that Charleston's area is broken down into numerous small islands. These islands are relatively flat and covered with marshes, and are separated from each other by rivers, shallow inlets, streams, and creeks. Figure 1 shows the major islands, which include: Isle De Palms, Sullivan's Island, James Island, Morris Island, Folly Island, Kiawah Island, Cole Island, John's Island, Parker Island, Long Island, Goat Island, Daniel Island, Shutes Folly Island, and many others. The islands can be visualized and divided into two distinct groups. First, the barrier islands, which are situated along the coast, include Isle De Palms, Sullivan's Island, Folly Island, and Kiawah Island. These barrier islands are parallel to the Atlantic Ocean, and are composed mainly of sand on the ocean side and saltwater marshes on the inland side. They are fairly long, approximately three or more miles each, but are relatively narrow in width with averages of about one-half mile.

In addition to the barrier islands, there are also other islands, which are further inland, and for the most part, they are much larger in size. Some of the largest islands are John's Island and James Island, which are situated on either side of the Stono River to the southeast of Charleston. Being more inland, these islands lack most of the saltwater marshes near the barrier islands, but due to their low sea level do have large swampy areas intermingled with trees and grassy vegetation.

Geographic Axis of Advance

With a basic understanding of the geography and terrain, four different axes of advance become apparent in order to lay siege to the city. These axes are as follows: directly toward Charleston through the harbor, flanking Charleston through the northern islands, flanking Charleston through the southern islands, and a deep inland attack from the west through South Carolina. The axes of advance through the northern and southern islands can further be broken down into several separate possibilities. For the southern islands, it is possible for troops, for example, to move along the Stono River from the Atlantic Ocean, or from some point further south over the islands, such as Savannah, Georgia. The same situation is possible for the northern islands. Troops could advance from the Atlantic Ocean over the northern islands, or they could move along the coast over the islands from some location further north. Tactically, the terrain plays a key role in determining whether the approach is feasible, acceptable, and suitable for seizing Charleston. The four axes have been depicted in Figure 2 on the next page. Each of these different approaches represents a slightly different course of action, and several are only feasible in specific circumstances. Moreover, each of these approaches has many limitations, which require analysis.



Figure 2. Attack Approaches to Charleston

Source: Approaches have been drawn on a topographic map provided by U.S. Geological Survey - Topographic Map: *Charleston Quadrangle*. Map is furnished through Topozone Maps a la Cart, Inc., 2003.

Arrows and numbers in Figure 2 depict the four different axes of advance. The first approach is shown by an arrow directly into Charleston harbor, and is marked by #1. The second approach (#2) utilizes the southern islands. The third approach (#3) utilizes the northern islands. The fourth approach (#4) attacks Charleston overland from deep within South Carolina.

In the first approach (#1) forces would attempt to conquer Charleston by occupying the harbor, and forcing the city to surrender. This course of action relies primarily on naval forces to seize control of the harbor. For naval forces to enter the harbor, they are required to pass through a very constricted opening near the harbor entrance. This opening is less than one nautical mile of which the majority is too shallow to allow vessels to enter without running aground. On the southern side of the entrance is Cummings Point on Morris Island, and on the northern side of the entrance is Sullivan's Island. Even flat-bottomed ships are highly constricted by this entrance. Once the ships have passed the harbor entrance, they must travel over five miles before they reach Charleston. During this transit, they must travel slowly to keep from running aground, and are, therefore, highly restricted in their maneuverability. With the exception of the small entrance the harbor is completely surrounded by land, which is well within the range of most artillery and cannons used during both the Revolutionary War and Civil War. In other words, if the harbor is well defended, it makes a perfect trap for ships to be sunk as they try to maneuver into the harbor. Moreover, once in the harbor, their departure is limited in that they must leave through the same narrow entrance. Figure 3, which is shown on the next page, gives a detailed view of the harbor.



Figure 3. Topographic Map Showing Charleston Harbor Approach

Source: Topographic Map: *Charleston Quadrangle*, U.S. Geological Survey, furnished through Topozone Maps a la Cart, Inc., 2003.

Another difficulty with the first approach (#1) is that there are few places in the harbor to conduct amphibious operations without falling under possible attack of enemy forces. The marsh areas and overall shape of the harbor impedes amphibious operations.

It should be noted that ships could navigate the Cooper River and Wando River, heading past Charleston, and further upriver. However, these rivers are extremely difficult to navigate, and ships in the rivers are vulnerable to fire from the riverbanks. Unless Charleston surrenders or naval forces completely neutralize enemy artillery and shore batteries, naval forces will not be able to seize the city in the first approach (#1). In this case, army forces are necessary on the ground in order to occupy the city and defeat forces that naval gunfire cannot destroy. It should always be remembered that ships alone are unable to hold ground or occupy terrain. Therefore, the consideration for using army forces is critical to this course of action.

To summarize the first approach (#1), forces enter directly into the harbor and attempt to capture the city through mainly naval forces. Several geographic factors limit naval capabilities. These include: restricted ship maneuverability, narrow harbor entrance, overall shape of the harbor, and poor landing areas. This course of action also makes several assumptions. The approach assumes that naval ships are able to successfully enter into a confined harbor that is highly restricted in maneuverability, and force the enemy to surrender. In other words, it assumes that naval forces can overcome the defensive advantages of the harbor, and overwhelm the enemy. Likewise, it assumes that the enemy will either surrender or allow enough time for naval forces to land troops in order to occupy the city. In any case, the terrain around the harbor favors those defending the city.

The second possible approach (#2) utilizes the southern islands as an approach to attack Charleston on its southern flank. A possible course of action for this axis of movement is to utilize the Stono River to move troops from the Atlantic Ocean to attack

Charleston on its southern flank. Once up the river, troops could also conduct envelopment and attack Charleston from its rear. As previously discussed the Stono River separates James Island on the east and John's Island on the west. The river is relatively shallow and does not allow deep draft vessels. Therefore, only flat-bottom ships, such as gunboats and barges, are able to transit up the river; hence this course of action primarily is useful to army forces in barges or other types of shallow draft vessels. The river prevents the utilization of most heavily armed deep draft naval ships. At about ten miles upriver from the Atlantic Ocean, the Stono River makes its closest point to Charleston, which is about three miles east of the city. The first four miles of the river is surrounded by vast marshes and swamps that make troop landings difficult. The ability to transport artillery and other heavy equipment through the swamps and marshes is also limited. Moreover, the movement of troops along the riverbanks is slow due to marshes along the river itself. However, the river is an effective means with which to move troops and lightweight equipment inland closer to Charleston. The surrounding terrain is near sea level and does not necessarily offer many advantages to the defenders except that the marshes and swamps impede the movements of attacking forces. Figure 4 shows a detailed topographic map of the southern islands in the Charleston area.



Figure 4. Topographic Map Showing Stono River Approach and Southern Islands

Source: Topographic Map: *James Island Quadrangle*, U.S. Geological Survey, furnished through Topozone Maps a la Cart, Inc., 2003.

In addition to the Stono River, Lighthouse Inlet is another possible course of action for southern island approach. The upper portion of Lighthouse Inlet is shown on the far left middle of Figure 4. Lighthouse Inlet is located between Folly Island and

Morris Island. Figure 5 gives a more detailed view of the inlet, and the interconnecting water routes off the inlet itself among the numerous small islands between Folly Island and James Island. An arrow has been drawn on the topographic map to help identify the inlet.

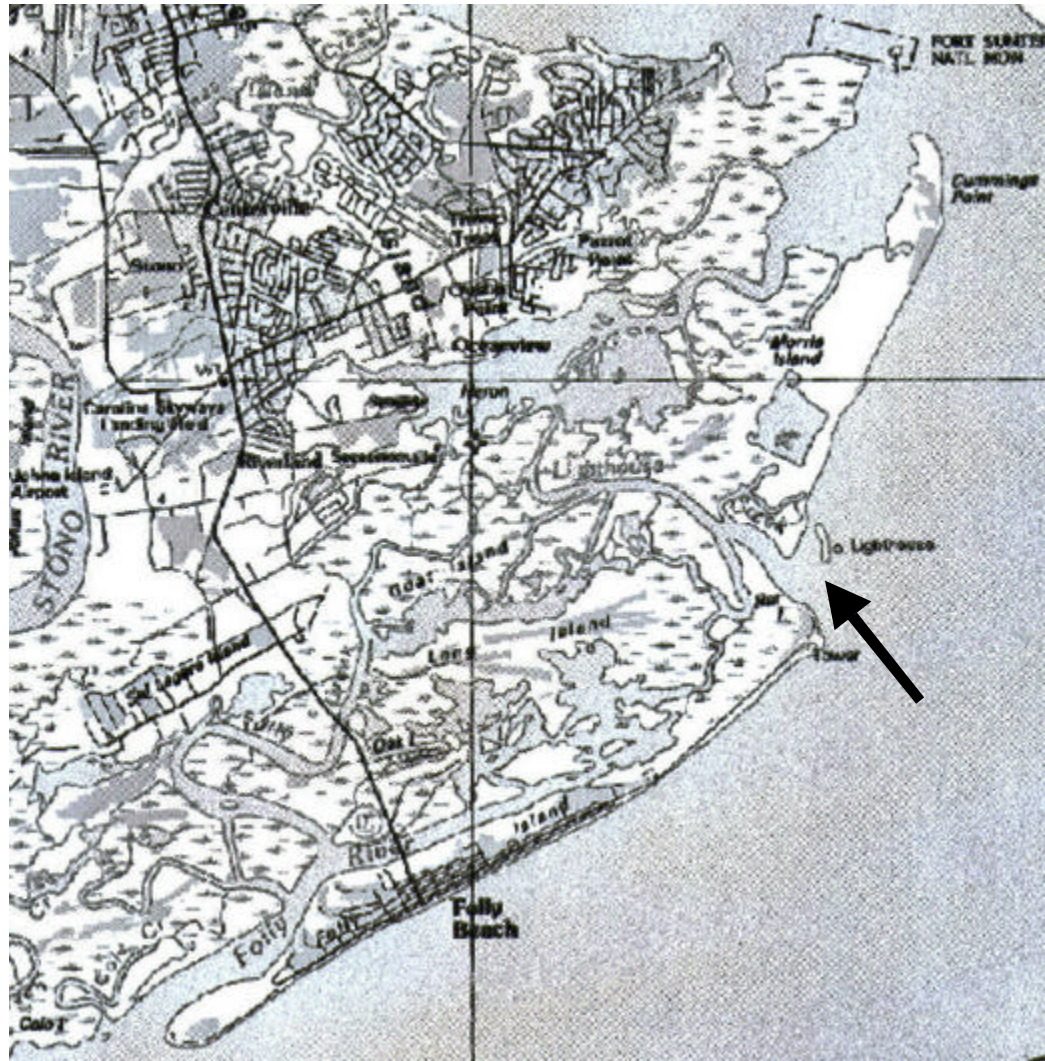


Figure 5. Topographic Map Showing Lighthouse Inlet Approach

Source: Topographic Map: *James Island Quadrangle*, U.S. Geological Survey, furnished through Topozone Maps a la Cart, Inc., 2003.

Besides going up the Stono River and/or utilizing Lighthouse Inlet, another possible course of action for the southern island axis is for troops to move overland through the islands from some coastal location further south of Charleston. The terrain does not necessarily inhibit the movement of troops overland, but there are numerous marshes, swamps, creeks, and rivers that would slow their progress. There are several large coastal staging areas, such as Savannah, Georgia, approximately one hundred miles from Charleston, which could serve as possible locations from which to move troops northward. There are also numerous other southern inlets to the islands from the Atlantic Ocean that are usable for amphibious forces. These include the North Edisto River Inlet and South Edisto River (located around Edisto Island), Saint Helena Sound (Saint Helena Island), Port Royal Entrance (Hilton Head Island), and Savannah River (Savannah), which is shown in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Coastal Area South of Charleston

Source: Major George B. Davis, U.S. Army, Leslie J. Perry, and Joseph W. Kirkley, *The Official Military Atlas of Civil War*, compiled by Captain Calvin D. Cowles (New York: Arno Press Inc & Crown Pub Inc, 1978; reprint of 1891 ed. of the Atlas to accompany the official records of the Union and Confederate Armies published by Govt. Print Office in Washington).

Although the southern geography and terrain have many inlets and rivers that support amphibious operations, the southern overland distances to Charleston are rather excessive, but not necessarily prohibitive. To get a rough idea of distances, one inch in

Figure 6 is equal to ten miles. The geography of the southern islands does support multiple amphibious operations; however, there are no river systems or inlets, which are parallel to the coast. The river and inlet systems for the southern islands flow from the top left hand corner of Figure 6 diagonally to the bottom right hand corner of the topographic map. Therefore, although it is possible to land troops at numerous locations south of Charleston along the coastal islands, troops are required to go overland in order to proceed northeastward to Charleston. When determining the feasibility of using an overland route through the southern islands, military planners would need to consider many river and water crossings in their planning. Additionally, the swampy terrain limits the movement of heavy overland vehicles, horsedrawn or otherwise.

The third approach (#3) utilizes the northern islands as an axis to attack Charleston on its northern flank. This approach has many of the same characteristics as the approach using the southern islands. Large marsh and swampy areas exist intermixed with many small islands. The northern islands near Charleston are shown in Figure 7. As already discussed, the Intra-coastal Waterway, which can also be clearly seen in Figure 7, is man-made and did not exist during the Civil War and Revolutionary War.



Figure 7. Topographic Map Showing Area North of Charleston along Atlantic Ocean

Source: Topographic Map: *Fort Moultrie Quadrangle*, U.S. Geological Survey, furnished through Topozone Maps a la Cart, Inc., 2003.

The major northern islands near Charleston are Sullivan's Island and Isle de Palms. Sullivan's Island forms the northern side of Charleston's harbor entrance. Like the southern islands, any amphibious attack through the northern islands from the Atlantic

Ocean requires forces to move through the coastal marshes. In fact, the marshy terrain behind Sullivan's Island and Isle de Palms, as shown in Figure 7, is more restrictive to troop movement than the area around Stono River in the southern islands. The marshes behind these two northern islands are well-defined and about five miles wide. Once past the marshes, there are also significant terrain obstacles that make a northern flanking attack of Charleston extremely difficult. Forces are required to cross the Wando River and Cooper River in order to lay siege to Charleston. Both of these rivers are wide and extremely deep, and would require extensive river crossing operations.

Another course of action for the northern island axis is for troops to move overland through the northern islands from some coastal location further north of Charleston, and conduct a flank attack. There are several coastal areas that could be used to land troops, and move them overland to Charleston. Some of these possible locations are shown in Figure 8 on the next page, and they include: Dewee's Inlet, Caper's Inlet, Bull's Bay, Santee River, and Winyah Bay. Comparing Charleston's northern and southern coastline, there are fewer inlets in the north to facilitate and aid in amphibious operations. However, the Santee River, which is located about one-third of the way down from the top of Figure 8, allows forces to be transported by barge inland. One disadvantage of using the Santee River is distance. The Santee River is over thirty-five miles northeast of Charleston. This course of action still involves several major river crossings, such as the Cooper River and Wando River, in order to besiege Charleston.

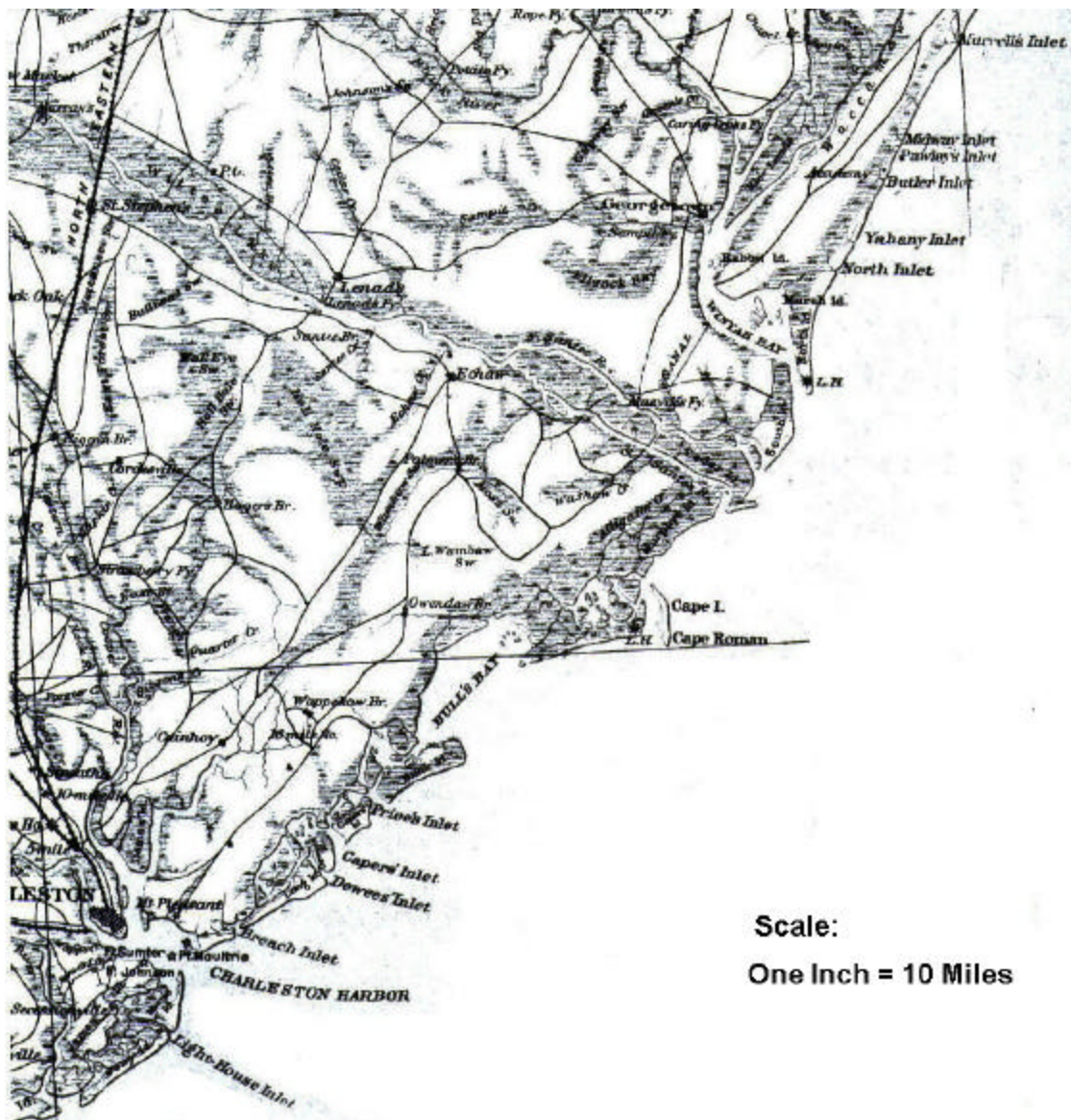


Figure 8. Coastal Area North of Charleston

Source: Major George B. Davis, U.S. Army, Leslie J. Perry, and Joseph W. Kirkley, *The Official Military Atlas of Civil War*, compiled by Captain Calvin D. Cowles (New York: Arno Press Inc & Crown Pub Inc, 1978; reprint of 1891 ed. of the Atlas to accompany the official records of the Union and Confederate Armies published by Govt. Print Office in Washington).

Lastly, the fourth approach axis is to attack Charleston from deep in the rear. This approach avoids geographic difficulties of entering into the harbor or crossing the islands

along the coast for a flank attack. The most probable direction of attack would be from Columbia, South Carolina. The deep inland geography around Charleston does have some swamps, but is mostly covered with wooded and grassy vegetation. This terrain is more favorable for the movement of ground forces. The movement of troops deep inland would cut off lines of communication to Charleston. Moreover, historically, the road systems and transportation networks are well suited to move troops from deep inland. Since before the Revolutionary War, Charleston, which has always been a key port facility, has had a fairly advanced inland network of roads (and later railroads) to move cotton and other supplies to and from the city. This network supported the inland transportation of materials, which arrived by ship, and aided in the export of goods by ship. It is also important to note that Charleston is surrounded by water on all sides with the exception of the western side of the city. The geography of the area would prevent troops from withdrawing, and force them to surrender. The only way for the enemy troops to withdraw would most likely be through naval transports out of the harbor. However, this axis depends upon having forces deep inland. It is suggested that this axis would be the most preferable, if large inland forces existed to attack the city from the west. When he marched his troops through Georgia to Savannah during the Civil War, General Sherman finally caused Charleston to surrender. Realizing the difficulty in defending against an inland attack, the Confederates abandoned Charleston.

Importance of the Axis of Advance and Geography

The four axes of advance and the area's geography are important for both defensive and offensive planning. First, they are important for determining what fortifications and man-made terrain obstacles are necessary to enhance the area's defense.

These defensive planning considerations for Charleston include the location of batteries, defensive strongholds and forts, the array of troops, and the protection of lines of communication and supply. For the offensive, the terrain combined with the possible axis of advance plays a key role in determining the necessary planning and type of forces necessary to capture Charleston.

Evolution of Charleston's Defenses

From the time period prior to the Revolutionary War to the end of the Civil War, Charleston's defenses changed considerably. Most of these changes were made to improve the natural defenses and obstacles already inherent in the area's geography and terrain. A general trend to increased defensive fortifications is seen through this period. There is also a trend to counter the four different axes of approach. The changes to the defenses are not only well-thought out, but also take into consideration past failures, changes in technology, and new tactics.

Therefore, an evolution in the Charleston's defensive system is seen. Prior to the Revolutionary War, Charleston's defenses were centered on the harbor's entrance. Several fortifications were built to prevent enemy forces from entering into the harbor. The other three axes of advance were largely ignored. During the Revolutionary War, few changes were made to this defensive system, and Charleston was finally seized in 1780. During the inter-war period between the Revolutionary War and Civil War, additional fortifications were built to protect the harbor, such as Fort Sumter. However, the emphasis was still on defending the harbor.

With the start of the Civil War, there was a sudden change in the defense strategy. The threat of a possible Union attack led a drastic increase in fortification building. While

the Confederates continued to increase the security of the harbor by constructing new batteries, there was an emphasis on also increasing defenses along the coastline outside of the harbor. Many new defensive fortifications were built along the barrier islands on the northern and southern sides of the harbor.

As the Civil War progressed, the South expected the North to attack Charleston overland through the southern islands. Therefore, additional fortifications were built on James Island and Morris Island. The southern island defenses continued to increase early in the war after the Union took control of Hilton Head and Port Royal Sound, which is located further south along the coast. With the loss of Port Royal and the stationing of a large Union army force on Hilton Head Island, the Confederates finally abandoned John's Island, and concentrated building more sophisticated fortifications, batteries, and defensive works on James Island. Anticipating a southern island axis of advance, the Confederates built defenses to prevent the success of such an attack. It should also be noted that the fortifications were built on the avenues of approach that were utilized by the British during their successful siege of Charleston in 1780. With the landing of Union troops on Folly Island and the battle to occupy Morris Island, the defenses of James Island increased progressively.

The last stage of defensive planning in the Civil War occurred after Sherman had successfully marched through Georgia, and was heading toward the Atlantic to split the Confederacy into two parts. During this phase, there was an increased emphasis in defending Charleston from an inland axis of advance. In order to understand, the evolution of Charleston's defenses, a more in depth understanding of the Revolutionary War and Civil War defenses is necessary.

Charleston's Revolutionary War Defenses

During the Revolutionary War, the British were faced with many geographic challenges and defenses as they tried to capture Charleston. General Clinton saw first hand the effect of these defenses when he failed to take Charleston in 1776. Two major fortifications were built by the Americans to protect Charleston. On Sullivan's Island, which is on the northeastern entrance to the port, the Americans built Fort Moultrie. On the southern entrance to the port, the Americans built Fort Johnston on James Island. The two forts acted together to provide an interlocking defense for the entrance to Charleston. The location of these forts can be seen below in Figure 9, which was drawn in 1780.

Fort Moultrie can be seen at the top right-hand corner of Figure 9. It is located on the tip of Sullivan's Island. It should be noted that Sullivan's Island is separated from the mainland by a fairly wide and deep channel. It is also separated from Long Island (known today as Isle de Palms) by another fairly deep channel.

During General Clinton's first attack on Charleston in 1776, he had decided to take Sullivan's Island and capture Fort Moultrie, as a precursor for further assaults on Charleston. However, General Clinton did not fully understand the area's geography, and landed troops on Long Island without any means to cross these channels, causing them to become stranded and unusable in his attempt to take Fort Moultrie. General Clinton had mistakenly thought that the channels separating the islands from the mainland were much shallower and could be crossed without naval transports. His failure to fully understand the geography resulted in delays that finally led to the British withdrawal in 1776 when British naval forces attempted to take Fort Moultrie without the full support of General Clinton's army forces. Sullivan's Island was only accessible to Mount Pleasant on the

mainland by a single bridge, which was built at Hetheral Point. It should also be noted that the darker gray shaded areas in Figure 1 depict marsh and swamp environments. The northern part of Sullivan's Island is covered in marshes and bogs, which make it more difficult to capture from the north.



Figure 9. Map of Charleston in the American Revolution

Source: Map 16 – U.S. Naval History, Department of the Navy, *The American Revolution, 1775-1783; An Atlas of 18th Century Maps and Charts: Theatres of Operations* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972; reprint of a Plan of the Town, Bar, Harbour and Environs, of Charlestown in South Carolina with all the Channels, Soundings, Sailing-marks from the Surveys made in the Colony; Engraved by William Faden; Charing Cross, 1780 in London”).

In addition to Fort Moultrie, Figure 9 also clearly shows the location of Fort Johnson, which is on a distinct promontory off James Island. The fort can be found in the center of Figure 9. To the east of Fort Johnson, there were several geographical features, such as Morris Island and several marshes and bogs, which added to the overall protection of the fort from land attack. Fort Johnson's guns were aligned to support Fort Moultrie in the defense of the harbor. The area directly adjacent to Fort Johnson was extremely shallow making it more difficult for war and transport ships to take the fort by sea.

Fort Moultrie's location with respect to the harbor entrance and harbor sea lines was critical to the city's defense. As already discussed, a geographic feature that made Charleston a difficult port to capture during the Revolutionary War was the limited sea-lane approaches from the Atlantic. Numerous sand bars inhibited the transit of ships into the harbor, and enhanced the defensive system of forts. The main ship route was called "Ship Channel" in 1780, and can be seen in the bottom of Figure 10.

Looking at Figure 10, it is clear that there were limited entry routes into Charleston. Only six channels existed between the sand bars that blocked the harbor. However, of the six channels, only three were usable by most merchant ships and naval vessels. North Channel, Eight Feet, and Middle Channel, which are shown in the northeastern part of Figure 10, were effectively unusable because they were either too shallow or too difficult to navigate. The Swash, Ship Channel (previously mentioned as the main ship channel), and Lawford Channel, were usually used. In any case, all three channels were located in the lower left hand corner of Figure 10. The "Lighthouse," located on Light House Island, was the main navigational landmark for entering port, and

it was used as the navigational aid for the Swash and Ship Channel. Lawford Channel, on the other hand, used a church in Charleston as its navigational aid. One of the main anchorages was Five Fathoms Hole, which was located to the east of Light House. Five Fathoms Hole was used by the British to assemble their ship in preparations for their seizure of Charleston in 1780.

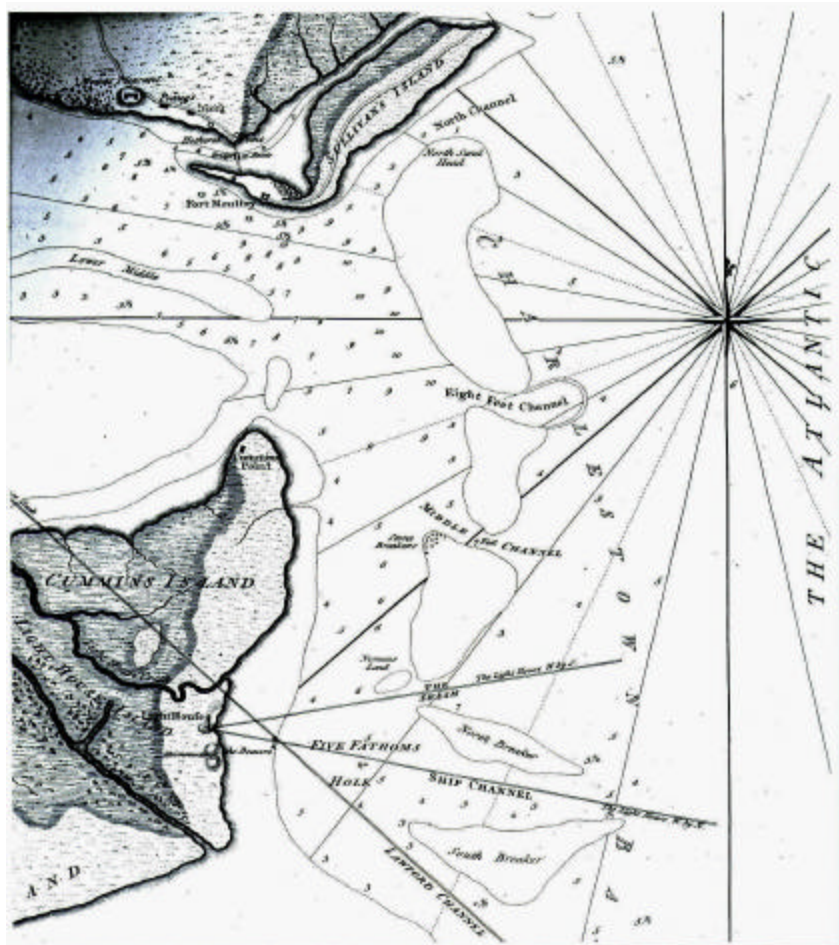


Figure 10. Ship Channels into 1780 Charleston

Source: Map 16 – U.S. Naval History, Department of the Navy, *The American Revolution, 1775-1783; An Atlas of 18th Century Maps and Charts: Theatres of Operations* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972; reprint of a Plan of the Town, Bar, Harbour and Environs, of Charlestown in South Carolina with all the Channels, Soundings, Sailing-marks &c from the Surveys made in the Colony; Engraved by William Faden; Charing Cross, 1780 in London).

The positioning of Fort Moultrie with respect to the main anchorages and ship channels caused it to act as a force multiplier for Charleston's defenders. Since the main sea channel (Ship Channel) and ship anchorages (Five Fathoms Hole) were located to the south of Fort Moultrie and the harbor's entrance, ships were forced to sail northward to enter Charleston harbor. In this case, the attacking ships were faced head-on with the full power of Fort Moultrie's guns. With their bow pointed toward the fort during their northern movement, their own cannons, which were located on the port and starboard sides of their ships, were often masked. Naval vessels in the eighteenth century were only designed for broadside assaults in which opposing ships would maneuver against each other for a port to port, or for a port to starboard attack. Even if the ships made high-speed attacks on the fort, they still needed to slow down to keep from running aground. During the 1776 naval attack on Fort Moultrie several frigates ran aground and others were heavily damaged. Many other ships misjudged the fort's range and failed to effectively concentrate firepower.

The city's defenses presented a formidable problem for the British. During the 1776-failed attempt to seize Charleston, General Clinton learned that neither the army nor the navy forces could succeed without each other's assistance. To overcome these difficulties, a more coordinated and joint attack was necessary.

Charleston's Civil War Defenses

During the Civil War, the North was faced with new defensive challenges as it attempted to capture Charleston. Following the American Revolution, new fortifications and batteries were built around Charleston. In many ways, the North was faced with a greater difficulty than the British were in 1780. These enhanced defensive fortifications

only increased the necessity for joint army and naval operations. Moreover, the Union, like the British before them, still had to deal with the same marshes, swamps, barrier islands and other geographical barriers that made movement of army and naval forces difficult. Despite the geographical lessons learned from the British, and the improved defensive fortifications, the Union continued to ignore them, and attempted to use mainly naval forces in their attempt to capture Charleston.

Although the South utilized Fort Moultrie and Fort Johnson in a similar manner against the North as was done against the British in 1780, several new forts had been added to increase the harbor's defense. Most notably was Fort Sumter, which was built in the center of the harbor entrance between Fort Moultrie and Fort Johnson. During the events leading to the Civil War, the Union had tried to hold out in Fort Sumter and maintain some control over the harbor; however, a lack of supplies and attacks from the surrounding forts and batteries forced the North to finally abandon the fort in April 1861. Figure 11 is a map of Charleston that was developed by the U.S Government following the end of the Civil War to document the enemy and friendly defenses for the official records.

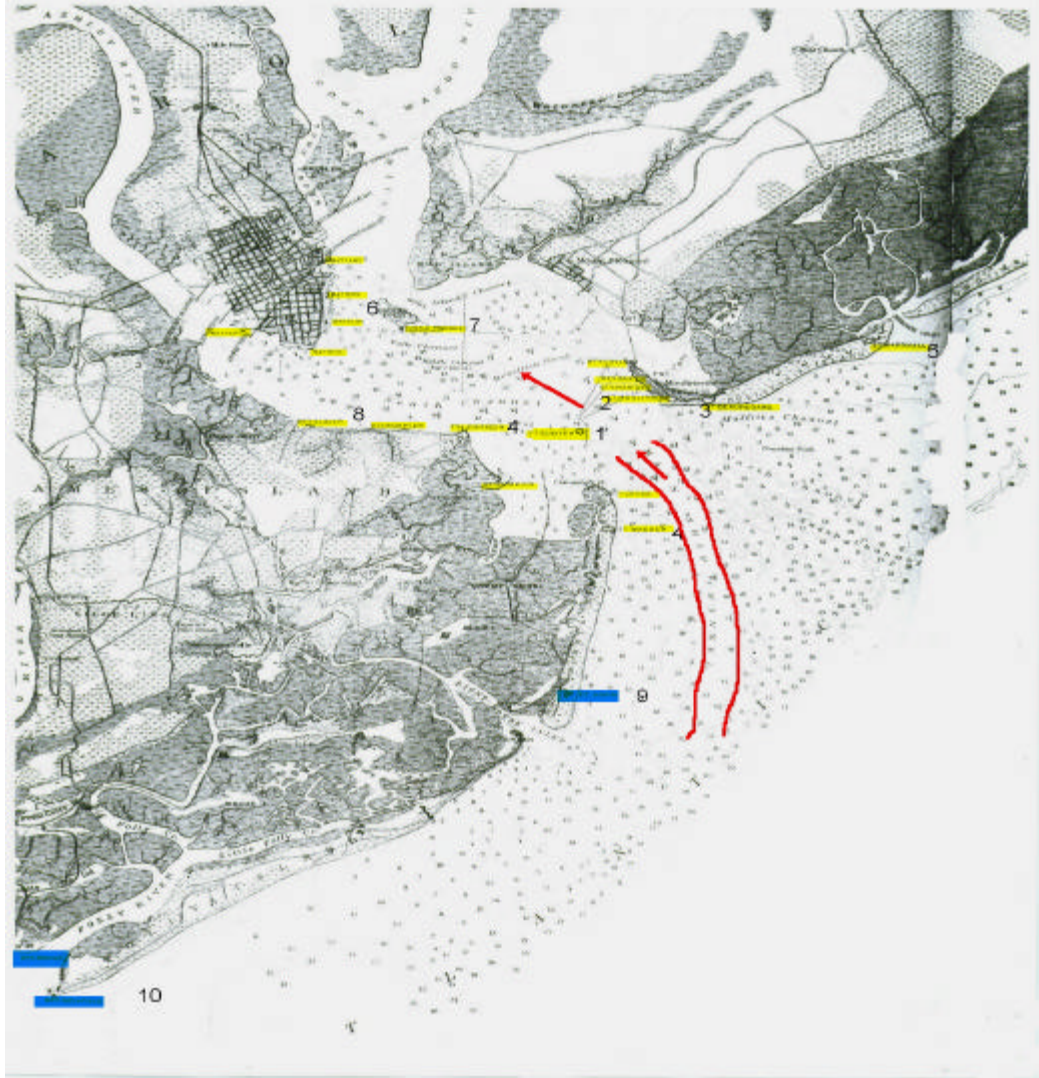


Figure 11. Map of Charleston in the Civil War

Source: Major George B. Davis, U.S. Army, Leslie J. Perry, and Joseph W. Kirkley, “Map of the Defenses of Charleston City and Harbor,” *The Official Military Atlas of Civil War*, compiled by Captain Calvin D. Cowles (New York: Arno Press Inc & Crown Pub Inc, 1978; reprint of 1891 ed. of the Atlas to accompany the official records of the Union and Confederate Armies published by Govt. Print Office in Washington).

The Main Ship Channel has been outlined in Figure 11. The ship channels into the harbor had changed little since the Revolutionary War. There had been some dredging to remove increased silt and mud, but for the most part the depths over the bar were about

the same. Unlike the Revolutionary War ships, which relied on sails, the Civil War vessels were steam-driven. These ships could better navigate the channels. They had more maneuverability and less chance of running aground when attacking the coastal fortifications.

The Confederate fortifications, batteries, and defenses are highlighted in gray on Figure 11, while the Union's are highlighted in slighter darker color. Numbers (#) have been added to the map to aid in identifying and locating the various fortifications. As shown in Figure 11, the South, throughout most of the Civil War, held the inner harbor defenses. In addition to those already mentioned, Fort Sumter (#1), Fort Moultrie (#2), and Fort Johnson (#4), there were also many other Confederate coastal and harbor fortifications. Besides Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island, there were Fort Beauregard (#3), Fort Marshall (#5), Battery Marion (#2), Battery Bee (#2), and Battery Cove (#2). Across from Battery Cove, there was Battery Gary on the mainland. Additionally, to support Fort Johnson, there were Battery Glover (#8), Battery Wampler (#8), and Battery Simkins. To increase the defenses of Charleston itself, there were also numerous city batteries (#6), which were constructed. Although some of these city batteries probably existed during the Revolutionary War, there were not as many of them, nor were they as effectively utilized. On Shutes Folly Island, the South used Castle Pinckney (#7) for defense. Additionally, on the northern tip of Morris Island, the Confederates constructed Fort Wagner (#9) and Battery Gregg (#9). Through this interlocking tactical network of well-placed fortifications, the South had developed substantial firepower in order to protect the port of Charleston from naval attack.

The North, in comparison, had control of only a handful of southern island coastal fortifications, and did not control any of the harbor defenses. The North did, however, occupy Folly Island and the southern tip of Morris Island, which is located in the lower left-hand corner of Figure 11. It should be noted that by 1863 a picket line separating Union and Confederate forces existed to the east of Folly Island and Morris Island. By 1864, the North had constructed Fort Shaw (#9) and Battery Purviance (#9) on the southern tip of Morris Island, and Fort Green (#10), Battery Delafield (#10), Battery Mahan (#10), and several other batteries on Folly Island. Additionally, the Union also constructed several batteries in the marshes east of the picket-line separating Northern and Southern forces.

In addition to the fortifications that were built in the harbor and coastlines, the Confederacy also constructed fortifications on the southern islands to prevent the Union from using the Stono River, Lighthouse Inlet, other creeks and rivers, and non-marsh areas to invade Charleston by way of the southern island axis of advance. It is important to note that the British had used the southern islands to attack Charleston during the successful 1780 siege, and the city's defenders were poorly prepared for that type of offensive. Figure 12 shows the defensive fortifications that the South constructed to help defend the southern islands.



Figure 12. Charleston's Southern Island Defenses

Source: Major George B. Davis, U.S. Army, Leslie J. Perry, and Joseph W. Kirkley, *The Official Military Atlas of Civil War*, compiled by Captain Calvin D. Cowles (New York: Arno Press Inc & Crown Pub Inc, 1978; reprint of 1891 ed. of the Atlas to accompany the official records of the Union and Confederate Armies published by Govt. Print Office in Washington).

The Confederate defensive fortifications have been highlighted on the map in Figure 12. These defensive fortifications represent a classical area defense with well-developed barriers and fortifications. Looking at the choice of locations for the defensive fortifications, it is easy to see that the Confederates had a good understanding of the terrain and its vulnerabilities to attack. The southern island defenses complemented the natural geography extremely well. The southern island defenses are divided into a southern coastal island attack defense, and a more inland defense to either protect against an attack using the Stono River or to protect against a more overland attack across John's Island from the south.

To prevent a direct coastal attack on the southern islands, the Confederates built an intricate defensive system on James Island just inland of the natural marshes, which are behind the coastal barrier islands of Folly Island and Morris Island. A close examination of Figure 12 shows the detail and thought with which the South placed their fortifications. Starting at Fort Johnson, which is located at the top of Figure 12, an almost continuous line of batteries can be traced southward to Fort Lamar, which is located near Secessionville. The placements of these batteries not only took advantage of the marshy terrain, but were well placed to defend against a Federal naval assault using Lighthouse Inlet. Stretching in a southwestward direction from Fort Lamar to the Stono River, a continuous one-mile long fortification was built to prevent Union troops from taking advantage of the large grassy area, which is parallel to the Stono River as shown in Figure 12. Therefore, in the southern islands, a combination of man-made fortifications and marshy geography created a continuous defensive boundary, which was parallel to the coastline, from Charleston harbor all the way to the Stono River.

To protect against a Federal attack using either the Stono River or across John's Island, the Confederates also built a defensive network along the Stono River. Figure 13, which is shown below, depicts the upper defenses along the Stono River from Fort Pemberton to further upriver.



Figure 13. Charleston's Southern Island Defenses Further Inland

Source: Major George B. Davis, U.S. Army, Leslie J. Perry, and Joseph W. Kirkley, *The Official Military Atlas of Civil War*, compiled by Captain Calvin D. Cowles (New York: Arno Press, Inc. & Crown Pub, Inc., 1978; reprint of 1891 ed. of the Atlas to accompany the official records of the Union and Confederate Armies published by Govt. Print Office in Washington).

Figure 12 shows the lower end of this defensive system along the Stono River. This system starts at the end of the defensive line from Fort Lamar, and progresses through several batteries along the Stono River to Fort Pemberton. The Confederate defensive fortifications in Figure 13 have been highlighted to aid in determining their location on the figure. Looking further up the Stono River, there are many other batteries along the river itself.

As shown in Figure 13, the South also incorporated a layered defensive system behind this network of fortifications along the river at key terrain locations, such as road intersections and open grassy areas. Fort Bull, for example, is located at a key cross road area near the left hand center of Figure 13. The fort also is situated to defend the forward bridgehead of an important bridge that crosses the Ashley River. The road from this bridge leads directly to Charleston's rear. On Figure 13, Charleston's rear fortifications are also shown along the main road that enters Charleston from behind. This rear fortification emphasizes the defensive-in-depth concept. If forces are able to pass through Fort Bull and cross the Ashley River or are able to cross the Ashley River at some other southwestern location, this rear fortification adds to the final defense of Charleston. There are also several defensive batteries along a key transportation network that is known as "Turnpike Road," which runs diagonally along the right hand corner of Figure 13. In addition to the bridge near Fort Bull, there is also another bridge over the Ashley River, which directly enters into Charleston, at the end of the Turnpike Road. The line running parallel to Turnpike Road is the Charleston and Savannah Railroad, which strategically connects Charleston to Savannah.

Like the southern islands, the Confederates developed a system of fortifications to prevent an attack through the northern island axis of advance. Figure 14 shows the northern island fortifications, which have been highlighted. The Confederates took advantage of the terrain to incorporate it into their defensive system. A two and one-half mile defensive boundary fortification, which is shown at the top middle section of Figure 14, was situated between the marshes behind the coastal barrier islands and swampy areas along the Wando River. This boundary was well placed to prevent enemy troops from moving through the grassy middle section of the northern islands. Figure 14 also shows the defensive fortifications along Sullivan's Island, which were used to protect the northern islands and support Fort Moultrie at the harbor entrance.



Figure 14. Charleston's Northern Island Defenses

Source: Major George B. Davis, U.S. Army, Leslie J. Perry, and Joseph W. Kirkley, *The Official Military Atlas of Civil War*, compiled by Captain Calvin D. Cowles (New York: Arno Press Inc & Crown Pub Inc, 1978; reprint of 1891 ed. of the Atlas to accompany the official records of the Union and Confederate Armies published by Govt. Print Office in Washington).

Overall Comparison

Charleston's geography enhanced by the city's defensive fortifications made it a difficult port to capture if resolutely defended. The geography hampered both the efforts of the British in 1776, and the North in the 1860's. It is proposed that Charleston's geography played a key role in necessitating the need for joint army and navy operations in order to successfully capture the city. Naval attacks could not overcome the city's harbor defenses, and army troops required significant naval support to attack the city and penetrate the swamps, island channels, and marshes surrounding the city.

Despite the difference in time periods, both the North in the 1860's and the British in 1780, were confronted with comparable terrain and geography. The terrain had not substantially changed since the Revolutionary War. The overall shape of the harbor still presented the same problems, as well as the surrounding rivers, islands, marshes, and swamps. However, it is proposed that the Union encountered a more formidable defense than the British, because the South used the geography more to their advantage than the Colonials did in 1780. Fearing another coordinated joint inland and naval attack, the Confederates constructed more inland and naval fortifications. It is especially important to note that many of the inland defenses were constructed to solve many of the terrain vulnerabilities, which the British took advantage of in 1780. These fortifications and defenses made it even more difficult for the North to seize Charleston.

While the South took full advantage of the geography in devising defenses, the North failed to develop the necessary joint tactical capability to overwhelm these defenses, and overcome the advantageous geographic position held by the defenders. In other words, the Union did not take fully into account the implications of the geography,

and what limitations it imposed on them during combat. General Clinton learned the hard way how underestimating Charleston's terrain could lead to defeat in 1776. In 1780 he was able to overcome the geography by utilizing a joint naval and army force with the necessary troops, synchronization, and overall coordination to overwhelm the defenses. With a more enhanced and sophisticated defensive system, the North's requirements to overcome the geography were even more critical than the British before them.

¹ Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-0 – Operations* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 14 June 2001), 5-5.

² Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

THE BRITISH SIEGE OF CHARLESTON.

Overview

During the Revolutionary War, the British were able to successfully capture Charleston. After an unsuccessful attempt in 1776 when they had to withdraw their forces, the British finally accomplished their goal in 1780. A detailed joint plan, which synchronized British naval and army forces, was pivotal to overcoming Charleston's defenses and geography. During the failed attempt in 1776, British efforts were rather uncoordinated and not well planned. Navy and army forces were unable to effectively synchronize their military power to increase their effectiveness. However, in their attempt in 1780, the British developed a well-coordinated joint attack, which was highly successful.

General Clinton, who was commander in chief of all British army forces in the American colonies, was pivotal in developing these military plans and in synchronizing army and naval forces. It is suggested that he learned several vital lessons from his initial failure in 1776. First, he developed an appreciation of the area's geography. Second, he understood the necessity of having sufficient force to overcome the geography and city defenses. Third, he understood the importance of developing a well-planned joint operation utilizing joint army and naval forces. Fourth, he had already lived through the humiliation of the withdrawal from Charleston after the failed attempt in 1776, and did not want to repeat the failure.

Working with his naval counterpart, Admiral Arbuthnot, General Clinton was able to produce a plan using joint forces to effectively undertake a combined sea and land

attack. It is important to note that the British did not have a joint command or command structure during the Revolutionary War. The fact that no joint structure existed made the coordinated use of joint forces more difficult. The army and naval forces had completely different chain of commands. The British proved that it was possible without any sort of joint command structure to accomplish this task. Many historians have suggested that the failure of the Union to take Charleston in the Civil War can be attributed to a lack of a joint command structure. The success of the British in coordinating joint forces without a joint command structure in Charleston proves this shortcoming could be overcome.

During the Revolutionary War, the successful siege of Charleston in 1780 was one of the biggest victories for the British. Yet, it was not an easy victory, and if it had not been for the joint application of naval and army forces, it would have probably been unsuccessful. The British not only had to deal with the geography on the area, but resistance from the city's defenders. The Americans were prepared to defend the city, and fought to the last to hold onto it. This is one of the reasons that the British captured so much of the American force, which included ships, personnel, supplies, and military equipment. It would have made more sense for the Americans to abandon the city, and conduct a withdrawal. In his plan Clinton had envisioned an American withdrawal and possible escape of American forces into the South Carolina swamps. Yet, this never happened. Instead, the British were able to not only capture Charleston, but a significant number of American troops in the process. This made the campaign to conquer Charleston an even greater victory.

To analyze the successful British siege of Charleston in 1780, this chapter has been divided into several sections. The overall framework of this chapter is to progress

from more a broad understanding of the situation to a more detailed examination of why the siege was successful. The first section will establish the historical context in which the siege occurred. The next section will examine the failed attack in 1776, and its possible implications for the successful siege in 1780. The third section will analyze the successful British effort in 1780. Finally, the last section will discuss the role of jointness in the siege.

American Revolution Overview

A broad understanding of the American Revolutionary War is important because it sets the stage for the Charleston siege. The historical context in which the siege occurred is critical in determining why the British forces were able to operate in a joint manner during this particular operation. An examination of the backgrounds and personalities of the key leaders is also important to understanding their mindset and perception of the situation. Was it the necessity of the situation that made it possible, was it more common in the American Revolution for British forces to operate jointly, or was there something else that influenced their ability to operate jointly in this campaign? The historical context of the situation will help in answering these questions. Moreover, a broad understanding of the history also reveals the importance of Charleston to the goals and strategies of the British military leaders.

For the British, the Revolutionary War had not gone as well as they had originally expected. The American rebels, for example, had put up a greater fight than expected, and the American loyalists had not come to the aid of the crown in the numbers anticipated. The initial successes early in the war had turned to failures by 1777. Despite numerous attempts, the British had not been able to destroy General Washington's forces,

which continued to reorganize and gain strength. The worst failure occurred when a large British force, under the command of General Burgoyne, was forced to surrender at Saratoga, New York in 1777. This surrender led to the replacement of General Howe, commander in chief of all British army forces in America, with General Clinton. Prior to this appointment, Clinton had been a subordinate commander to Howe.

In 1778 the French entered the war on the American side, and completely changed the entire scope and perception of the conflict. The British government, becoming more concerned about possible French activities against other British colonies outside of North America, relegated the American rebellion to a lesser importance. For the British naval forces, it also meant that they would no longer be able to guarantee command of the sea against future American operations. The possible threat of French naval forces attacking British ships, transports and ports around the American colonies now existed. Additionally, to protect Britain's colonial empire from French attack, the British were diverting resources and troops from America to other parts of the world. There were even debates in the British government about negotiating a peace with the American rebels, and the Carlisle Commission was established to begin deliberations on a possible political resolution to end the war with the Americans. While the British government worked to counter the French threat, only a few minor British military operations occurred in the American colonies for the next year; hence a stalemate had occurred.

With reports of reinforcements on the way, and to break the stalemate, Clinton in 1780 decided to undertake a major offensive, and developed a new strategy for the British to defeat the American forces.¹ Instead of concentrating his main force in the northeast as had been previously done in the war, he would divide his main force into two

separate parts, and open up a second major offensive front in the south.² He envisioned that the southern force would move along the coast from South Carolina through North Carolina and Virginia, and end up in the Chesapeake area. This force would move northward only after securing the inland areas. At the same time his northern force, if properly reinforced and manned, would move southward toward the Chesapeake with the intent to reunite the two forces. Tactically, this plan would push the Americans between the two armies with the goal of destroying General Washington's forces. The British naval forces would also play an important role by sailing up the Chesapeake, which enabled them to travel deep inland, to provide logistical and military support to the British forces.

Key to Clinton's new southern offensive was control of Charleston. Therefore, Charleston became an important decisive point in his overall plan. A decisive point, which is usually geographic in nature, is defined as a point that if correctly identified and controlled, gives a commander a marked advantage over the enemy, and greatly influences the outcome of an operation.³ For this reason, Clinton could not allow the siege of Charleston to end in failure, and he decided to personally take charge of the expedition, delegating command of his headquarters in New York to a subordinate. Using the same reasoning, he became more personally involved with the planning, coordinating, and facilitating of an operation, which, as he had seen in 1776, necessitated joint forces.

Another factor to consider, when placing the upcoming attempt to capture Charleston in context, is the array of British forces in the south. The only areas that the British occupied were Florida and some parts of Georgia. While not large enough to impose a serious threat to the American forces in the area, the occupied Georgia coastal

areas did provide an important logistical base. British control of Savannah, which had been captured in 1778, would prove crucial in providing logistical support, and in serving as an assembly point for Clinton's attack on Charleston. Despite his best efforts, which included direct attacks and unsuccessful sieges, Major General Benjamin Lincoln, who commanded the Southern Department (American commander for all operations in Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia), had not been able to drive the British out of Savannah and Georgia's other coastal areas.

Ironically, General Augustine Prevost, who commanded the British forces in Georgia, almost successfully captured Charleston in a deceptive ploy in 1779 by simply marching his forces from Savannah to Charleston. Despite the city's defenses, and against the advice of General William Moultrie, who commanded the American forces around the city, the South Carolina government had initially offered to accept neutrality in the war in order to prevent the city from being attacked. With Moultrie's forces preparing to fight and defend the city, and with Lincoln's forces moving from Georgia to help, Prevost, realizing the impossibility of the situation, withdrew to Savannah to avoid possible defeat of his forces. However, fearing that the British would capture their outermost southern fort and use it against them, the Americans destroyed Fort Johnson during the attempted siege. The destruction of Fort Johnson weakened the city's harbor defenses, thereby aiding Clinton's upcoming attack in 1780.

Besides the general historical situation and array of British forces, another broad context that needs to be addressed is the overall relationship between the British naval and army forces during the war. The relationship between the army and naval forces was generally poor throughout most of the war. Although there were occasional periods when

the two forces operated effectively in a joint manner, such as in the 1780 successful siege of Charleston, there were many others in which the two forces disagreed on tactics and strategies, and acted in an independent manner seeking their own objectives.

It is important to remember that no common command existed between the British army and naval forces. While General Clinton was commander in chief of the army forces, Admiral Arbuthnot was commander in chief of the naval forces. Following several failed attempts to coordinate the services in joint campaigns, Clinton had reached a conclusion that the military command should not be separated between the services, but should be assigned to the navy if a “war of expedition” [raids] was to waged, and to the army if a major land campaign was to be waged.⁴ Prior to Arbuthnot’s selection in 1779 as the new naval commander, Clinton, hoping to improve the joint relationship, submitted his own list of five navy officer candidates, who he felt would work with him in an effective joint manner.⁵ Despite Clinton’s attempts, Arbuthnot was selected. In a letter to Clinton, Lord George Germain, in relation to this matter, said, “I have the satisfaction to assure you that the Admiral [Arbuthnot] goes out with the strongest desire to cultivate and maintain the most perfect harmony between the fleet and army, to cooperate with you in every measure for the King’s service, and [to] give every facility and assistance in the transportation and accommodation of the troops you may think proper to employ in attacking the seacoasts and in carrying on the war according to the mode I have, in my secret and confidential letter, pointed out to you.”⁶

Although Arbuthnot and Clinton acted jointly in the 1780 attack on Charleston, their future joint dealings together deteriorated rapidly. This lack of jointness and willingness to work together deteriorated to the point that by the end of the war, the two

rarely met face to face, and most coordination was done through correspondence. This failure to act jointly culminated in General Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown. By sending his ships for refit instead of patrolling the coastline and supporting General Cornwallis's operation, Arbuthnot allowed French naval forces to block Cornwallis's escape, and force his surrender.

It is important to note that the Charleston campaign was the first time that Clinton and Arbuthnot had worked together. Perhaps, because it was their first campaign together, and they did not know each other, the two men were able to work more jointly. Although one would think that the success of the Charleston campaign would have created an environment that favored jointness, it most likely had an opposite effect. Although the two commanders were able to agree on an effective joint plan, and did carry it out for the most part, both leaders came out of the Charleston campaign distrusting each other. Clinton, for example, was angered by Arbuthnot's unwillingness to send his ships into the Cooper River, and Arbuthnot was angered when Clinton overrode his choice for the naval landing location at the Stono River.⁷ This friction between the commanders was further exacerbated during what was perceived by the army as an unfair split of the captured Charleston booty between the two services.

Lastly, to put the siege of Charleston in a proper perspective, a broad understanding of the background and personality of the key leaders is necessary. First, Arbuthnot had a rather undistinguished career. Prior to this appointment as commander of the naval forces, he was rather an obscure naval officer. Some historians have questioned why the British appointed him to the position of commander.⁸ His past performance had been satisfactory, but not exceptional.

Clinton, on the other hand, was better known than his naval counterpart. To start with, his upbringing was different from most other army leaders. He was the son of an admiral, and instead of joining the navy, he joined the army and served in the Seven Years' War. Yet, he had also been educated to appreciate the importance of naval assets in warfare. He had many close friends, who were high-ranking British naval and army officers, and he was also respected by the monarchy. Therefore, unlike most other army and naval officers, he had a basic understanding of both services, and he was well connected politically.

Stemming from his background, he developed a more joint idea of warfare. Clinton correctly realized the importance of naval support for logistics in the American colonies.⁹ As discussed, he believed that some sort of joint integration of the services was necessary to win the war. If his forces got too far inland from the coast, he also realized that they had the danger of culminating because they would pass their operational reach and naval logistical support. His chastised General Cornwallis, for example, for failing to understand this principle when Cornwallis proceeded deep inland into South Carolina, and suffered heavy losses without the support of naval forces.

Clinton had many personal faults that need to be considered. Although he was detailed and foresighted as a planner and strategist, he was often indecisive in execution. Likewise, his inability to keep command and control of the army is one of the reasons for Britain's final defeat in the Revolutionary War. Finally, Clinton's biggest flaw was his personality, which was often abrasive and caused him to be at odds with superiors and peers. His true character is revealed in his memoirs in which he tries to place blame on others, and clear his name.

Unsuccessful Siege of 1776

General Clinton and Commodore Parker were unsuccessful in their attempt to conquer Charleston in 1776. This failure can be attributed to poor planning, lack of joint coordination of forces, and an inaccurate understanding of the local geography. The army and naval forces did not coordinate their activities, nor did they accurately communicate their difficulties and limitations. The army forces watched helplessly, unable to provide assistance on Long Island (now called Isle De Palms) as the naval forces were heavily damaged during an attack on the rebel fortifications [later known as Fort Moultrie] on Sullivan's Island. Unable to gain control of Sullivan's Island, and with the naval force reduced in strength, Clinton and Parker retreated and headed back toward New York.

The attack plan focused on taking control of Sullivan's Island. Initial intelligence had indicated that "the rebel work on Sullivan's Island (the key to Rebellion Road and Charleston) was in so unfinished state as to be open to a *coup de main* and that it might be afterward held by a small force under cover of a frigate or two."¹⁰ Although it was true that the fort had not yet been completed, this assumption that the fort could easily be taken proved wrong. Clinton experienced first hand the difficulty and delay (caused by contrary winds and gales) in getting the larger ships over the bar and into the Ship Channel. Several ships had to be lightened in order to accomplish this. The smaller frigates and transport were finally able to make it past the bar, and safely to the Five Fathom Hole anchorage on 7 June 1776. During this movement, two ships ran aground, one of which sank. The larger ships had to wait several more days for a favorable wind to get over the bar in the Ship Channel. Clinton had decided to land his troops on Isle De Palms, and then cross over to Sullivan's Island.¹¹ He assumed there would be less risk to

his troops to land them on Isle De Palms, which had less surf and no enemy forces.

However, after landing about 2,500 troops on the island on 16 June, he found that “the passage which separates was no where shallower at low water than seven feet instead of eighteen inches, which was the depth reported.”¹²

With only fifteen flat-bottomed boats and no assistance from the frigates, Clinton determined that he could not effectively coordinate a landing (only seven hundred men could land at a time) on Sullivan’s Island, counter the island’s defenses, and protect the landing craft during the troop movement. Figure 15 shows the attempted crossing to Sullivan’s Island.

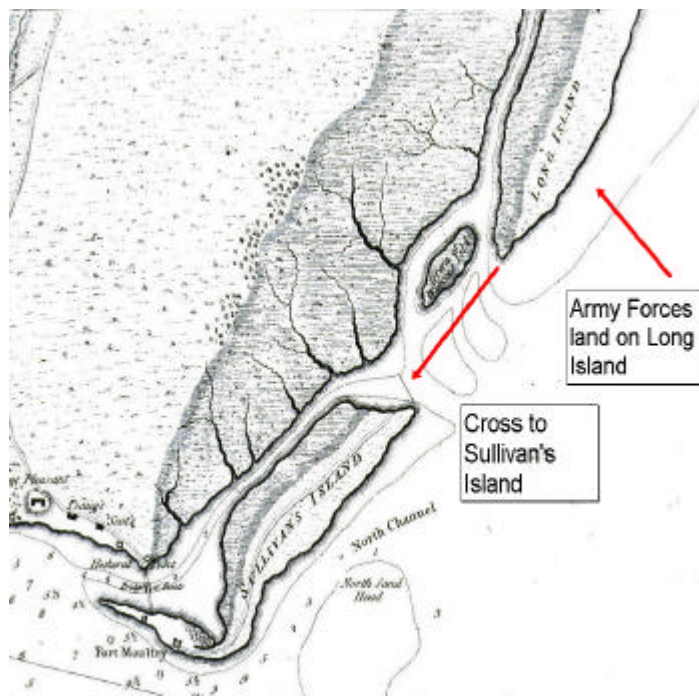


Figure 15. Crossing to Sullivan’s Island

Source: Map 16 – U.S. Naval History. Department of the Navy, *The American Revolution, 1775-1783; An Atlas of 18th Century Maps and Charts: Theatres of Operations* (US Government Printing Office, 1972; reprint of a Plan of the Town, Bar, Harbour and Environs, of Charlestown in South Carolina with all the Channels, Soundings, Sailing-marks from the Surveys made in the Colony; Engraved by William Faden; Charing Cross, 1780 in London).

Becoming impatient with Clinton's inability to attack Sullivan's Island, Commodore Parker decided to attack Fort Moultrie using his naval forces on 28 June 1776.¹³ For the naval assault, Parker had a battle fleet of eleven warships, which were the *Bristol* (50 guns), *Experiment* (50 guns), *Solebay* (28 guns), *Actaeon* (28 guns), *Active* (28 guns), *Syren* (28 guns), *Sphinx* (20 guns), *Ranger* (armed ship), *Friendship* (armed ship), *Thunder* (bomb ship), and *Carcass* (bomb ship).¹⁴ The total guns available to Parker were 270. Fort Moultrie had only 31 guns. Despite this almost nine to one advantage in firepower, the result of the naval attack was a complete disaster for the British. Unsure of the depth of the water near Sullivan's Island, many of Parker's captains remained too far away to maximize the use of their cannons. During the attack three frigates ran aground, and most of the other ships were heavily damaged by gunfire from Sullivan's Island. At one point during the attack, the defenders almost run out of gunpowder and ammunition, but without Clinton's army forces, which watched the battle from Isle De Palms, the British could not take advantage of the opportunity. In a letter to the Secretary of the Admiralty, Commodore Parker stated, "if the troops could have cooperated on this attack, His Majesty would have been in full possession of Sullivan's Island."¹⁵ The damage to the British ships was extensive with the *Bristol* (40 dead, 17 wound), *Experiment* (23 dead, 56 wounded), *Active* (15 casualties), and *Solebay* (15 casualties) suffering the most.¹⁶ The Colonials in comparison had only 12 dead, and 25 wounded in the fort. The *Actaeon*, which had run aground during the battle, was burned and scuttled by the British.

Following the failure of this campaign, there was an ongoing dispute between Clinton and Parker over who was to blame, the role of the army and naval forces in the

assault, and the overall coordination problems. In their writings both leaders paint a slightly different picture of the events that occurred, and what precipitated the naval attack, which resulted in failure. Questions concerning signals of when to begin the attack, and the actual capabilities of each other's forces at the time of the attack were raised. However, both commanders were fairly consistent in their feelings that a lack of coordination between the naval and army forces, and the poor understanding of the geography were critical to the failure. With the fortifications unfinished and inadequately manned, and with the large British military force assembled, it appears that the British had the force ratio and superiority necessary to capture Sullivan's Island. Yet, a lack of jointness, combined with a poor understanding of the geography, prevented their victory.

Siege of Charleston in 1780

The surrender of Charleston in 1780, with all of its troops and military equipment, was probably the biggest victory for the British during the war. General Clinton summarizes this victory in the following passage:

By this very important acquisition there fell into our hands seven generals and multitude of other officers, belonging to ten Continental regiments and three battalions of artillery, which, with the militia and sailors doing duty in the siege, amounted to about six thousand men in arms. The rebel Lieutenant Governor, the council, and other civil officers became also our prisoners; and four frigates, several armed vessels, and a great number of boats, with four hundred pieces of ordnance, five thousand stand of small arms, and a vast quantity of gunpowder with other naval, artillery, and military stores were delivered up with the town to His Majesty's arms. We had, moreover, the great additional satisfaction to find that this very complete success had occasioned the shedding of much less blood than could have been expected from so long and obstinate a resistance, the loss sustained by the King's troops in killed and wounded amounting to only 268, and that of the enemy not much exceeding 300.¹⁷

In other words, this victory was even greater than what Clinton had originally envisioned.

Not only had the British occupied Charleston itself, but they also had captured all the

American forces, military equipment, and supplies sent to defend it, with little or no loss to the British. Clinton had originally feared that during the attempted siege the American troops would retreat to the swamps, and only regroup for a later attack. This is one of the reasons that he wanted Admiral Arbuthnot's naval forces in the Cooper River. It is also important to note that a large number of American naval vessels had been captured. The captured frigates, for example, represented almost fifty percent of the total American naval force. To understand why this campaign was so successful, a detailed analysis is necessary.

The campaign officially started in 1779 when Clinton and over five thousand of his troops sailed from New York to Savannah. As previously noted, by undertaking this campaign, Clinton had assumed a considerable amount of risk. His military forces in America were considerably less effective than those of his predecessor, General Howe, as seen in the following comment from Clinton with respect to some of his forces leaving New York for the Charleston campaign:

When I undertook this move, my army was inferior to that of my predecessor actually had by at least sixteen thousand men, the ships of war serving with me were not equal to a third of the number he had, and the Commanders in Chief of the two services [General Clinton and Admiral Arbuthnot] were scarcely know to each other; while the rebel forces were considerably improved in discipline and increased in strength, and at the same time made bold with confidence by the conquest and capture of General Burgoyne's army and the support given to their cause by the ships and troops of France and their late alliance with Spain. Add to this that, as the fleets of France had twice already since I came into command rode triumphant in American seas, the spirit of enterprise on our side must of course be damped and the plan of all subsequent operations confined within a much narrower compass, from the great hazard to which water movements were likely to be exposed by their probable return.¹⁸

Despite the known risks, Clinton proceeded with his plan to divide his army and conduct a siege of Charleston. Arbuthnot assembled a fleet of over one hundred naval ships and

transports to move General Clinton's troops south from New York to Tybee Island, which was located just downstream of Savannah's harbor.¹⁹ To protect the transports from French naval attack and privateers, Arbuthnot included a large naval task force, which had five ships of the line, one fifty gun ship, two forty gun ships, four frigates, and two sloops. This troop movement was one of the largest that the British had executed in America, and required close coordination between British naval and army forces.

Due to bad weather and strong currents from the Gulf Stream, the fleet finally reached Savannah about four weeks later than expected. During the voyage, several transports had foundered, one of which was a ship that carried most of Clinton's heavy artillery and ammunition. Moreover, most of the horses for his cavalry died during the transit.²⁰ Therefore, Clinton arrived with few horses, and little ammunition and artillery. The naval forces would solve the problem with the lack of ammunition and artillery. Although some spare ammunition and supplies did arrive from Florida, which the British still held, and the Bahamas, Clinton had to rely primarily on the naval forces for support to make up these shortfalls. As stated by Clinton, "I think it, moreover, my duty to declare that, had it not been for the few heavy guns and ammunition lent me by Admiral Arbuthnot (though dealt out with a sparing and sometimes a seemingly reluctant hand), my advances would have been greatly retarded and my success rendered perhaps doubtful."²¹

Upon their arrival in Savannah on 2 February 1780, Clinton proceeded with his attack on Charleston. The key to this attack was the jointness of army and naval forces. The combination of naval and army forces would overwhelm Charleston's defenses, and force the city to surrender. The overall plan was both ingenious and extremely detailed.

By synchronizing their forces, the British were able to conduct a simultaneous land and sea attack. A detailed integration and coordination of both forces was necessary to ensure that the required shaping operations (such as: the amphibious landings, river control, river crossings, movement of naval ships across the bar and into the Ship Channel, protection of the army's flank, and fixing of American naval forces in port) occurred successfully. Moreover, during the operation, logistical support for the army forces would have been impossible without close coordination and support of the naval forces.

A general understanding and overview of Clinton's plan is necessary before a more detailed analysis is conducted. First, the plan called for a naval amphibious landing of army troops on the southern islands at the North Edisto Inlet, which was located at Seabrook Island. Seabrook Island is just south of John's Island, and it is about twenty-five miles south of Charleston. Next, his plan encompassed an initial axis of advance through the southern islands by the army forces. Once the army troops had secured Charleston's southern islands, which included John's Island and James Island, and Fort Johnson, naval forces would then enter through the Ship Channel and precede into Charleston harbor. The army forces would then cross the Ashley River, with the help of naval transports, and conduct an envelopment of Charleston from the rear. Envelopment is defined as a form of maneuver in which an "attacking force seeks to avoid the principle enemy defenses by seizing objectives to the enemy rear to destroy the enemy in his current positions; at the tactical level, it focuses on seizing terrain, and destroying specific enemy withdrawal routes."²² After successfully conducting the envelopment, General Clinton's decisive operation would focus on a land attack on Charleston from the rear by his army forces. A decisive operation is defined as the operation that conclusively

determines the final outcome of the major campaign or operation (in this case, the occupation of Charleston).²³ To support the decisive operation, the naval forces in the harbor would simultaneously perform several shaping operations, which were: fixing of American ships; naval artillery support to attacking army forces; blocking of retreating enemy forces; and securing of the army's right flank. Shaping operations are defined as those operations that "create and preserve the conditions for the success of the decisive operation."²⁴

Figure 16 is a map of Charleston drawn by the British in 1780 to capture the initial British movements and array of forces in the first part of the campaign. The map accurately depicts the situation prior to the British army forces crossing the Ashley River and enveloping Charleston from the rear, and prior to the British naval forces entering into Charleston harbor. Of particular importance, the figure shows Charleston's rearward defensive fortification line, which had been built by the Americans from the Ashley River to the Cooper River. Another important feature is the array of American naval forces, which are positioned in the Ashley River, and near the harbor entrance at Fort Moultrie. The British naval transports at North Edisto Inlet are shown on the bottom left corner of figure. From this starting point, the movement of Clinton's forces across John's Island and James Island is clearly depicted. Likewise, the movement of British naval forces to the Five Fathom Anchorage (located on the inland side of the Ship Channel) is also depicted. A line showing the direction from which Fort Johnson was seized has been annotated. The movement of British naval forces up the Stono River is also shown.

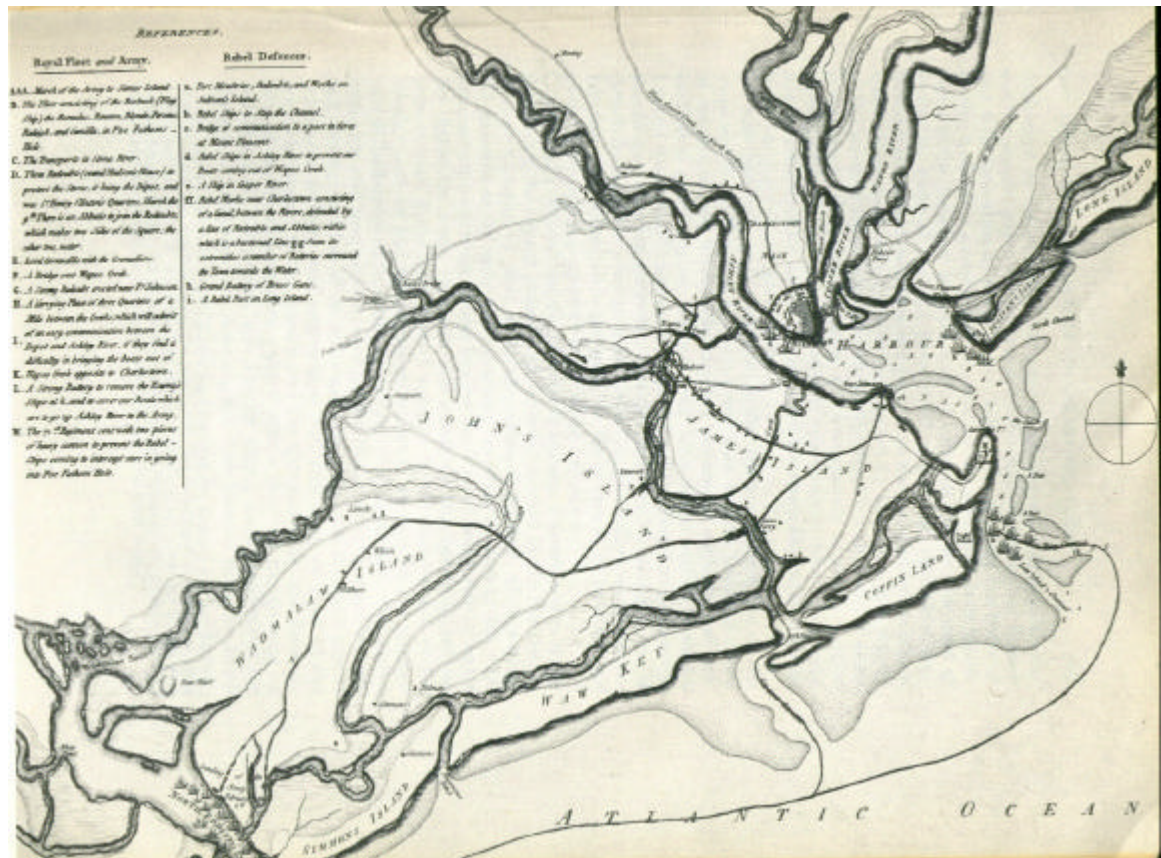


Figure 16. British Attack on Charleston

Source: "A Plan of the Military Operations Against Charlestown," London 1780 in Henry Clinton, *The American Rebellion, Sir Henry's Clinton's Narrative of His Campaigns, 1752-1782*, edited by William B. Willcox (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954).

The operation can be broken down into six different phases. In the first phase of the operation, British naval transports would land about five thousand troops on Seabrook Island (North Edisto Inlet). During this phase, General Clinton also conducted a deception operation by having fourteen hundred troops march up the Savannah River heading for Augusta, Georgia as a diversion.

Key to the amphibious landing on Seabrook Island was Captain George Elphinstone. He was the British naval officer assigned by Arbuthnot to command the landing and coordinate the river crossings in direct support of the army's operations. It is important to note that throughout the campaign, Elphinstone played the role of "unifier" between naval and army forces. After the campaign, Clinton made several references to the important role he played. In one reference, Clinton stated "nor must I neglect in this place to gratefully acknowledge my obligations to the officers and crews of the King's ships for the very great assistance I received from them, particularly to Captain Elphinstone and the officers and seamen acting under him on shore, whose professional abilities and indefatigable activity and zeal greatly facilitated the approaches of the troops to the object of our attack, and who also contributed their aid to the reduction of the place by a spirited and judicious management of the works they had the charge of."²⁵ Moreover, Clinton in a letter to Elphinstone wrote, "You are so much the soldier that you know our wants and can best state them."²⁶ In yet another letter, which was to Lord George Germain, Clinton reiterated his appreciation of Elphinstone's ability to interpret army requirements.²⁷

During the planning of the amphibious landing, Elphinstone actually sided with Clinton, and not his boss, Arbuthnot over the location of the landing area. Arbuthnot had proposed that the forces land on John's Island by the Stono River Inlet. Elphinstone, taking into account Clinton's objections and desire not to delay the British troops further at sea, persuaded his boss to conduct the landing at Seabrook Island. This proved important because as Clinton had feared, a storm arose, and if the troops had been at sea

on their way to Stono Inlet the entire campaign might have ended in failure. General Clinton summarized the situation as follows:

The transports, having got into North Edisto harbor without accident the day after we left Tybee, very fortunately escaped a violent tempest that arose in the succeeding night, whereby the expedition might possibly have been defeated had we been again entangled with the Gulf Stream, which would have been certainly the case had the Admiral persisted in his first design. For this piece of good fortune we were indebted to Captain Elphinstone's zealous and animated exertions, as also to his perfect acquaintance with all the island navigation of the Carolina coast, which enabled him to run the ships boldly up that difficult channel, which a person of less knowledge and decision in those matters would probably not have hazarded.²⁸

Therefore, the role of Captain Elphinstone in ensuring jointness, and helping to smooth the issues between the naval and army commanders occurred early in the operation. After the successful amphibious landing on Seabrook Island, Clinton's troops began to move overland across John's Island. During the movement, Elphinstone's naval transports were crucial in providing logistics and support to the army forces.

The next phase of the operation involved sending naval gunboats and vessels up the Stono River to help secure John's Island. With hardly any resistance, the British forces quickly secured John's Island, and crossed the Stono River with the assistance of naval forces by 24 February 1780.²⁹ Within a matter of days after crossing the Stono, the British army forces had also secured James Island as well. Included in the capture of James Island was Fort Johnson, which was essentially abandoned by the Americans. The ease with which the British took these southern islands is attributed to the Americans withdrawing their forces to the inner defenses of Charleston and to area west of the Ashley. General Benjamin Lincoln, who commanded the American forces, had ordered his troops to delay the British as much as possible, destroy the Stono River ferry equipment, and then to finally withdraw. The capture of Fort Johnson was relatively easy

because the Americans had never rebuilt the fort after it was destroyed during the attempted siege in 1779. By withdrawing his forces so quickly, Lincoln gave up key terrain to the British without a fight. Although the Americans were extremely limited in their forces, and were still in the process of building up additional forces to defend Charleston from the surrounding countryside, they did have the capability to hold out longer in the southern islands, and put up a better area defense. With the extended supply lines and lines of communication, the British were especially vulnerable to attack. During this time period, the Americans were also working hard to finish uncompleted fortifications and defenses within the city itself. Considering that the city had been attacked less than one year earlier by British forces, the lack of readiness of the American defenses is inexcusable.

Following the securing of James Island, the third major phase of the operation involved the transit of the British naval fleet through the Ship Channel and over the bar. This was probably the most important decisive point of the entire operation. From his experience in 1776, Clinton understood the difficulty of getting the ships over the bar. After successfully securing James Island, Clinton stated: “But the more serious operation [actual siege of Charleston] could not go on against the body of the place until our depots were formed and the Admiral could pass a naval force into the harbor to assist us with heavy artillery and ammunition for the operations of siege, and seamen and boats for the transportation of the troops to Charleston Neck [city of Charleston itself].”³⁰ Moreover, when referring to this phase of the operation, he further stated: “We could not have done anything till the Admiral got over the bar; and I appeal to him whether he had any thoughts of doing it till he had assembled his fleet, and whether he could do it before I

had sent two twenty-four-pounders and the Seventy-first to occupy Lighthouse Island [now called Morris Island].”³¹

General Benjamin Lincoln also recognized the significance of the decisive point at the Ship Channel. To prevent the British ships from successfully transiting the Ship Channel, he ordered the American naval forces to station themselves directly in front of the Ship Channel, and perform a crossing the “T” maneuver of attack.³² A crossing the “T” maneuver, which was still in use even during World War II, involves positioning a ship broadside to your enemy’s bow in order to maximize your firepower. With only a few guns located on the bow, the enemy ship is unable to protect itself from the firepower of the opposing ship. This maneuver significantly maximizes the firepower of the ship crossing the “T,” while minimizing the firepower of those forming the stem of the “T.” In this particular case, the British forces were at an even greater disadvantage because they were unable to maneuver in the Ship Channel. However, despite his order, Commodore Whipple, who commanded the American naval forces, refused to carry it out. Whipple was overly cautious, and did not want jeopardize his fleet. According to General Moultrie, “Commodore Whipple did not choose to risk an engagement with the British fleet.”³³ General Washington also understood the importance of defending the bar as shown in the following statement:

The impracticability of defending the Bar, I fear, amounts to the loss of the Town and the Garrison. At this distance, it is impossible to judge for you. I have the greatest confidence in General Lincoln’s prudence; but it really appears to me, that the propriety of attempting to defend the Town depended on the probability of defending the Bar; and that when this ceased, the attempt ought to have been relinquished.³⁴

General Benjamin Lincoln was the joint force commander for both the army and naval forces defending Charleston. He had been given the naval forces to directly support

his defense of Charleston. The only reason that the naval forces were there was to prevent Charleston from being captured. Therefore, despite having a joint command, Lincoln could not get his naval component to follow his orders and support his strategic concept of Charleston's defense; even when they were shown to be feasible. Although Lincoln considered having Whipple relieved, no formal action was taken.³⁵ The failure to follow Lincoln's orders and strategy proved disastrous for the Americans.

Instead of placing his ships near the Ship Channel as directed, Commodore Whipple chose to station them in a defensive line near Fort Moultrie. Whipple's naval fleet consisted of eight warships, which were the transport *Bricole* with forty guns, the *Providence* and *Boston* frigates each with thirty-two guns, the *Queen of France* with twenty-eight guns, the *L'Avanture* and the *Truite* each with twenty-six guns, the *Ranger* with eighteen guns, and the *Beaumont* with sixteen guns.³⁶ Additionally, he also had three gallies. The plan was to fire upon the enemy and rake the channel as they approached Fort Moultrie.³⁷ In a letter to Lincoln, Moultrie stated the following with respect to the plan.

He [Whipple] was to lay a little above Fort Moultrie within point blank shot of the fort, with his ships across, to rake the channel: in that situation it would have been impossible for them to pass without losing some of their ships.³⁸

When the British ships made it over the bar and started their movement towards the harbor entrance, Whipple found himself in a bad position with the guns of Fort Moultrie masked behind him and the British. Moreover, by lightening their ships the British were able to get their larger heavily gunned vessels over the bar. Whipple had not expected this, and suddenly found himself in a situation in which the British ships outgunned the combined guns of Fort Moultrie and the American naval forces. When it was determined

that a last ditch attempt to sink ships at the harbor entrance would not be enough to form a barrier to stop the British naval forces, Whipple was left with the only option of withdrawing his ships closer to Charleston, and up the Cooper and Ashley Rivers. As the British passed the bar, Moultrie accurately summarized the situation in a letter to Lincoln on 21 March.

The enemy have got in ten of their men of war, one of fifty guns, two of forty-guns, and seven frigates and twenty gun ships. We expect in a day or two, to see some smart firing between them and our vessels and Fort Moultrie: we have seven ships and three gallies to oppose them, if they will lay any time before the fort [Fort Moultrie], I will engage them; but it is generally thought they will pass us as fast as they can, and endeavor to take their stations above the town, in Cooper and Ashley rivers, where they will incommode us a little at our lines; but we are erecting batteries to keep them clear of us, which I hope will answer the purpose. I suppose we shall have their army soon on the neck [rear of Charleston], to blockade us; when that happens, you will hear but seldom from.³⁹

With the withdrawal of their ships closer to Charleston, the American naval forces had been rendered ineffective, and the overall control of the harbor had been given to the British.

In comparison, General Clinton did everything in his power to aid in the British transit over the bar. He had the army forces secure Morris Island, and transferred what few artillery resources he had to provide shore battery cover to the British naval forces, which were attempting to sound the Ship Channel. The Americans had removed all of the channel markers for the Ship Channel, destroyed the primary navigational bearing aid, which was a lighthouse on Morris Island, and removed a church steeple in Charleston, which was also used as another bearing aid for the channel. With the help of Clinton's army forces, the British were able to re-sound the channel and install new buoy channel markers; this operation was critical to ensuring the safe transit of the naval vessels over the bar.

With the successful transit of the British naval forces over the bar, the fourth phase of the operation, which was crossing the Ashley River to envelop Charleston from the rear, could occur. To undertake this operation, Clinton received additional troops from Savannah. These were primarily the troops that had originally been used as the deception operation. Clinton also waited for the return of Elphinstone, who had temporarily left his side to assist in getting the naval forces over the bar. Upon his return, Clinton remarked, “ You are of so much consequence to us that we cannot stir without your assistance.”⁴⁰ Arbuthnot, Clinton, and Elphinstone met to discuss the river crossing in a joint meeting. From this meeting, Clinton received seventy-five flat bottom boats for the operation under the command of Captain Evans, who was a British naval officer. As in previous operations, the naval forces were key to the success of the river crossing. Even Clinton was amazed by the naval support as shown in a letter to the Arbuthnot, in which he stated, “a million of thanks to you for your assistance in boats...it is most ample indeed.”⁴¹ As previously mentioned, the Americans had withdrawn their forces from the southern islands, with the strategy of preventing the British from crossing the Ashley River, which was last geographic defense separating Clinton’s troops from Charleston. Under the command of Captain Evans, the naval transports transited from the Stono River, and into Wappoo Cut [part of intra-coastal waterway today], which connects the Ashley River to the Stono. Clinton’s troops had already marched to the crossing location on the west bank of the Ashley River, and were awaiting the arrival of the transports to ferry them across the river.⁴² Quietly passing the American defenses along the Ashley River at night, the transports proceeded fifteen miles further upstream, and conducted the army river crossing at a location near Drayton Hall.⁴³ The Americans awoke to find that

the British were conducting a river crossing in a location that they were not prepared to defend against. By later in the day, the British army forces had rapidly moved toward Charleston, breaking ground within eight hundred feet of the Charleston's rear defensive fortifications across the "neck." The formal siege of Charleston had now commenced.

In the fifth phase of the operation, General Clinton continued to solidify his hold on Charleston before he made the formal attack on the city itself. At this point in the operation, Clinton described the city's remaining inner defenses, many of which were quickly built after his landing on Seabrook Island, in the following statement:

The fortifications of the place we had now sat down before were by no means contemptible, as may be perceived by the following sketch [Figure 16]. The defenses on the land side of the town extended in a chain of redoubts, lines, and batteries from Ashley to Cooper Rivers, into which oozed two deep morasses that lay in front of each of the flanks and were joined to one another by a broad canal. Betwixt this latter and the works of the place were two rows of abates, all the other various obstructions usual before fortified towns, and a double-picketed ditch. The center of the line, where the natural defenses seemed to be weakest, was strengthened by an enclosed hornwork of masonry, which was converted into a kind of citadel during the siege. And through the extent of these works were mounted eighty pieces of cannon and mortars of various calibers, from which a well served fire was unremittingly kept up. On the sea side a number of ships was sunk in the mouth of the Cooper; and the batteries which guarded the entrance of each river, and commanded the navigation up to the town, appeared to be equally formidably numerous with those to the land, and well furnished with heavy guns.⁴⁴

In preparation for the final attack on Charleston, Arbuthnot quickly sent his ships past Fort Moultrie and into harbor. The ships were then anchored near Fort Johnson. Since the fort had already been captured, the British ships were able to safely anchor at its foot; waiting for the next phase of the operation to begin. Clinton, in coordination with the naval forces, also sent over fourteen hundred troops across the Cooper and Wando Rivers to cut off Charleston's lines of communication. General Cornwallis was eventually given command of all army forces north of the Cooper River. His forces did encounter and

engage American forces, which were sent from Virginia, along the Santee River. Despite the engagements and possibility of overwhelming General Cornwallis's forces, the Americans retreated across the Santee River, and did not continue their advance to relieve Charleston.

Fearing that French ships might intervene, Arbuthnot decided to attack Fort Moultrie in order to completely secure the harbor. When a small force of troops landed at Mount Pleasant, the commander of Fort Moultrie surrendered without a fight. Clinton described the surrender in the following statement:

The rebel officer who commanded, not knowing his force and being alarmed by seeing another party take post on Mount Pleasant, looked upon his escape as impossible, and, having only a few militia with him for the defense of the place (the Continentals being withdrawn to Charleston), thought it better to accept the honorable terms offered him than risk the consequence of an assault.⁴⁵

The fall of Fort Moultrie was another loss of an important decisive point. The British naval forces now had uncontested control over the harbor entrance.

The last phase of the operation was the actual assault on Charleston itself. This phase never occurred because on 11 May 1780 Lincoln surrendered his forces and the city before it actually occurred. However, it should be noted that jointness between Clinton and Arbuthnot did become somewhat strained over the question of sending naval vessels into the Cooper River to prevent American forces from withdrawing during the attack. Although Arbuthnot had originally promised to do it during the planning stage of the operation, he appeared to be backtracking on it prior to the attack. It is unknown what would have happened, but it is safe to say that both commanders did operate jointly. Using a combination of naval and army forces, the British had overcome Charleston's geography and defenses and captured Charleston.

Jointness Analysis

The successful siege of Charleston required jointness in order to succeed. A coordinated and joint operation of army and naval forces were necessary. However, the primary question remains. Why were the British able to operate jointly? There are several plausible reasons that have already been discussed. One reason is that Clinton considered the siege of Charleston critical to his strategy to defeat General Washington, and he could not let it fail. Another reason is lack of personality issues between the leaders. Because Clinton and Arbuthnot did not know each other well, personality issues between the two did not impede their ability to act jointly.

Another possible reason for the jointness is due to the activities of Captain Elphinstone, who acted as a joint enabler bridging the gap between naval and army forces. Throughout his writings, Clinton continuously praised him on his understanding of army needs. This was rather unusual for Clinton, who throughout most of writings blamed the naval forces for not effectively supporting his army forces. It is especially important to note that Elphinstone is a subordinate, and not the commander of the naval forces. This suggests that junior officers can definitely influence jointness at the staff level.

Clinton's effective use of Battle Command also acted as a jointness enabler. Battle Command relates to the leadership element of combat power.⁴⁶ There are five elements of Battle Command: visualize, describe, direct, assess, and lead. The most important and difficult of the five is visualization. This involves the ability to understand the mission, enemy, troops, terrain, time available, and civil considerations (METT-TC). It also involves being able to understand the sequence of events and phases of an

operation. Clinton's visualization of the battlefield was flawless. He carefully developed a plan that took into account the METT-TC, and he accurately foresaw the critical decisive points in the operation. He realized early on that in order to make the operation work it required jointness in army and naval forces. This jointness was needed to overcome the geographic challenges described in Chapter 2. His campaign was very methodical and can be traced from one decisive point to the next. The decisive points are proposed as follows: landing at Seabrook Island, occupation of John's Island, occupation of James Island (include Fort Johnson), passing of naval ships over the bar, crossing of troops over the Ashley River, positioning of troops on Charleston Neck, and securing Cooper River. The most critical decisive point was the passing of naval ships over the bar.

Another important concept to consider is center of gravity (COG). A center of gravity is defined as "those characteristics, capabilities, or localities from which a military force derives its freedom of action, physical strength or will to fight."⁴⁷ Therefore, it is necessary to protect one's own center of gravity, while trying to neutralize or defeat an enemy's center of gravity. The quickest way to victory is to defeat an enemy's center of gravity.

The centers of gravity for the British and American forces were different. It is proposed that for the British, their center of gravity was their ability to operate jointly. The American's center of gravity, on the other hand, was their geographic location. Although he may not have been able to define it at the time, General Clinton accurately identified his center of gravity for this operation. This is clearly seen when he sent in troops to secure Morris Island and provided what little artillery he had to support the

British ships passing over the bar. Clinton realized that the failure to get the ships over the bar would jeopardize his joint capability; thus, directly neutralizing his center of gravity. Additionally, Clinton accurately identified the American's center of gravity as their geography and defenses. He sought to use his own center of gravity to overcome the enemy's geography.

While the British were successful in defending their center of gravity, the Americans were not as successful in defending theirs. The failure of the Americans to protect their geographic and defensive advantage is seen in several examples. The first example is that the Americans did not rebuild Fort Johnson after 1779. The British were easily able to occupy the fort, which had been abandoned. By not rebuilding the fort, the Americans weakened the harbor defenses, and allowed the British ships a safe location to anchor. Next, the Americans quickly withdrew from the outer geographic defenses of the southern islands. Without much of a fight, the Americans moved their forces to the inner Charleston defenses. The Americans gave up key terrain without any type of defensive plan in place. The most critical failure was the unwillingness of Commodore Whipple to risk his ships to defend the Ship Channel from the British. This was a weak spot in their harbor defense that could have been easily defended by his ships. No attempt was made to block the Ship Channel, or make a barricade as was attempted near Fort Moultrie. General Benjamin Lincoln recognized the significance of the Ship Channel, but he could not get his naval commander to follow his orders, and protect it from the British. Another example is the quick surrender of Fort Moultrie. Despite its importance to the city's defense, the fort was not adequately manned or re-enforced to withstand an assault.

Moreover, the commander of Fort Moultrie did not understand the significance of his role in the American center of gravity, and he surrendered without even so much as a fight.

This case study shows that a joint command does not necessarily ensure jointness. The British, for example, did not have a joint command. Yet, despite their lack of it, Clinton and Arbuthnot were able to operate jointly. The Americans, on the other hand, did have a joint command, which was similar to a joint task force (JTF), under the command of General Lincoln. Yet, they were unable to act jointly because the naval commander would not follow the JTF commander's orders. This failure to follow orders occurred at a critical decisive point that ultimately led to their defeat.

During this campaign, the Americans also failed to act jointly with France, their main ally and coalition partner. Throughout the campaign, Arbuthnot feared that French naval forces would intervene. This is the primary reason that he wanted to secure the harbor's entrance, and besiege Fort Moultrie before the main attack on Charleston could be conducted. There appears to be no evidence that French naval forces made any effort to assist the Americans during the siege. After Charleston was successfully captured, the British Admiralty received reports that French naval forces were moving toward the American coastline. With their intentions unknown, Clinton quickly turned over command of his occupation forces in Charleston to Cornwallis, and headed back to New York. If the Americans had been able to obtain the assistance of French naval forces at Charleston, Clinton's siege would have ended in failure.

The Americans did, however, attempt to obtain support from Spain who had joined the French in an alliance against the British in 1779.⁴⁸ Lincoln sent a French volunteer officer, Colonel Ternat, to Havana, Cuba with a request for immediate Spanish

military help, and an offer in return of 2,000 men for a later combined attack on British-held St. Augustine, Florida. The Spanish governor in Cuba, not sure of his authority to intercede in the conflict, refused to help.

¹Henry Clinton, *The American Rebellion: Sir Henry Clinton's narrative of his campaigns, 1775-1782, with an appendix of original documents*, ed. William B. Willcox (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 114-120; John A. Tilley, *The British Navy and the American Revolution* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 167.

²Willcox, Foreward to *American Rebellion*, xxxii-xxxiv.

³Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-0 – Operations* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 14 June 2001), 5-7.

⁴Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 142.

⁵Ibid, 142.

⁶Lord G. Germain to H. Clinton, 3 March 1779, Clinton, *American Rebellion*. 400.

⁷Carl P Borick, *A Gallant Defense –The Siege of Charleston, 1780* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 191-192; Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 160, 167,170.

⁸Tilley, *British Navy and American Revolution*, 164-165.

⁹Willcox, foreward to *American Rebellion*, xliii-xliv.

¹⁰Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 29.

¹¹P. C. Coker, *Charleston's Maritime Heritage 1670-1865* (Charleston: CokerCraft Press, 1987), 83.

¹²Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 31.

¹³William Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution* (New York: New York Times & Arno Press, 1968 (Reprint David Longworth, 1802), 174; Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 34.

¹⁴Coker, *Charleston's Maritime Heritage*, 84.

¹⁵P. Parker to Stevens, Secretary of the Admiralty, 9 July 1776, Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 377.

¹⁶Coker, *Charleston's Maritime Heritage*, 85.

¹⁷Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 171.

¹⁸*Ibid*, 159.

¹⁹Johann Ewald, *Diary of the American War: A Hessian Journal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 192-193.

²⁰Bernard A. Uhlendorf, ed. *The Siege of Charleston –with an account of the province of South Carolina: Diaries and letters of Hessian Officers from the Von Jungkenn Papers in the William L. Clements Library* (Ann Harbor: University of Michigan Press, 1938), 23; Henry Clinton to Lord G. Germain, 9 March 1780, K. G. Davies, ed. *Documents of the American Revolution 1770-1783*, Vol III -Transcripts 1780 (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1978), 53.

²¹Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 172.

²²Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-90 – Tactics* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 4 July 2001), Glossary-11.

²³Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-0*, 4-22 –4-23.

²⁴*Ibid*.

²⁵Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 172.

²⁶H. Clinton to Lord G. Germain, 9 March 1780, in footnote of Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 161.

²⁷H. Clinton to Captain Elphinston, 22 March 1780, in footnote of Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 161.

²⁸Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 161.

²⁹Ewald, *Diary of the American War*, 196-202.

³⁰Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 161.

³¹*Ibid*, 162.

³²Borick, *Gallant Defense*, 73.

³³Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, 11; Borick, *Gallant Defense*, 83.

³⁴Franklin B. Hough, ed., *The Siege of Charleston by British Fleet and Army under the Command of Admiral Arbuthnot and Sir Henry Clinton which terminated with the Surrender of that place on the 12th of May, 1780*, Reprint Albany, New York, J. Munsell, 82 State Street, 1867 (Spartanburg, S.C.: Reprint Company, Publishers, 1975), 10.

³⁵Borick, *Gallant Defense*, 76.

³⁶Coker, *Charleston's Maritime Heritage*, 106.

³⁷Banastre Tarleton, Lieutenant Colonel. *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America*, Reprint London, Cadell in the Strand, 1787 (New York: New York Times & Arno Press, 1968), 11.

³⁸William Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, 60.

³⁹*Ibid*, 61.

⁴⁰Borick, *Gallant Defense*, 96.

⁴¹Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 163.

⁴²Ewald, *Diary of the American War*, 215-216.

⁴³Uhlendorf, *Siege of Charleston*, 33; Tarleton, *Campaigns of 1780 and 1781*, 9; Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 163.

⁴⁴Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 163-164.

⁴⁵*Ibid*, 169.

⁴⁶Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-0*, 5-1 – 5-16.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 5-6.

⁴⁸Frank Moore, *Diary of the American Revolution From Newspapers and Original Documents*, Vol II (New York: New York Times & Arno Press Inc, 1969), 271; Henry Lumkin, *From Savannah to Yorktown – The American Revolution in the South* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1981), 43.

CHAPTER 4

THE UNION'S UNSUCCESSFUL SIEGE

Overview

The Union campaign to capture Charleston was one of the longest campaigns of the entire Civil War. It is also one of the longest sieges in the history of military warfare. Despite almost continuous operations from 1861 to 1865, Federal military forces were unable to capture Charleston. Only when General Sherman marched down from Atlanta to Savannah and then to Columbia, threatening Charleston's lines of communication, did the Confederates abandon the city, and withdraw their forces. Union forces that had been trying to capture the city for almost four years were then able to march into a deserted city and seize it by default. What is even more amazing is that the Confederates, who were able to withdraw the majority of their forces, did not even give the boys in blue the satisfaction of taking large numbers of prisoners of war. The overwhelming question is: Why did the Union's attempt to capture Charleston fail? Many historians have attributed the North's failure to a lack of sufficient resources for the campaign, and the feeling among Northerners that the campaign was not as important as other Civil War operations, which were occurring in Virginia, Mississippi and Tennessee. Yet, nothing can be further from the truth.

By 1862 the Union had allocated more than adequate naval and army forces to capture the city. The political will was also there to capture the city. Northern leadership had a strong desire to seize Charleston in order to gain an important political and psychological victory over the South. It was well known that the capture of Charleston by the Federals would be a major political setback for the South and a major rallying point

for the North. The failure to capture Charleston can be attributed to the Union's inability to understand the area's geography and defenses, to effectively operate jointly, to plan joint campaigns, to exercise battle command, and to correctly identify friendly and enemy centers of gravity and decisive points.

To analyze the Union's failed siege of Charleston during the Civil War, this chapter has been divided into several sections, which are similar to those in Chapter 3. The overall framework of this chapter is to progress from a more broad understanding of the situation to a more detailed examination of why the siege was unsuccessful. The first section will lay the historical context in which the siege occurred. The next section will examine the key leaders in the campaign. The failed siege will then be examined in detail. Finally, the last section will discuss the role of jointness, battle command, campaign planning, and centers of gravity.

Civil War Overview

The Union's overall strategy for winning the Civil War focused on the Anaconda Plan, which aimed at completely isolating the South from the rest of the world, allowing Federal army forces to finally force surrender. Economic isolation was critical to this plan. The Confederacy relied on the export of cotton to England and Europe for money to fund the war. Lacking the North's robust military industrial base, the South also needed to import European military equipment and supplies. To aid in preventing Southern imports and exports, the Union naval forces were divided into several blockading squadrons. Although it was nearly impossible to prevent materials from entering the South across the Texas-Mexico border, the Union naval squadrons could form blockades

of the Confederacy's ports in the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico. The responsibility for blockading Charleston was assigned to the Union's South Atlantic Blockading Squadron.

When many historians analyze the Civil War, Charleston is often overlooked, and is only thought of as the starting point of the war. More often than not, historians focus on the campaigns and battles in Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, and along the Mississippi River. Yet, the campaign in Charleston lasted throughout almost the entire Civil War, and involved tens of thousands of troops on both sides. With the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861, Charleston became the symbolic starting point of the Civil War. For this reason, Charleston also played a key political and emotional role for both Union and Confederate forces. The capture of Charleston by Union forces was, therefore, viewed as extremely important. Charleston, which had an excellent railhead, was also an important Confederate port in bringing in supplies and exporting goods. Therefore, according to the Anaconda Plan, its capture and isolation was also critical to the success of the overall strategy of the war.

Despite its best efforts, the Union navy was never able to completely shut down Charleston's harbor until the city was finally seized in 1865. Even though Union naval forces formed a blockade along the Atlantic coast, cities like Charleston and Wilmington continued to be ports where blockade-runners, operating on moonless nights and in the fog, could easily make it to sea before being stopped.¹ To increase their chances of making it through the blockade, Southern shipbuilders had designed special high-speed, low-profile ships, which were painted to make them hard to detect, as blockade-runners. Throughout the war until the city was finally captured in 1865, Charleston continued to

operate as a seaport for the Confederacy; this problem frustrated Federal naval and army forces to the end.

Charleston's Union and Confederate Leaders

To fully understand the Charleston campaign, a general understanding of the leaders involved, their time in command, and their frequent changes in command is necessary. When looking at the leadership on both sides, there was a substantial turnover of military commanders directly involved in the Union's campaign to capture Charleston, though the Union had a much higher rate than did the Confederates. Although part of this Union turbulence could be attributed to the long campaign duration, most of it was due to Northern frustration over a lack of results. A succession of naval and army commanders were relieved or replaced after failing to make any significant progress toward the capture of Charleston. On the other hand, while there were some changes on the Southern side, the Confederate leadership remained more stable.

The Union army had three different commanders for this campaign. The first commander was Major General David Hunter, who was assigned to command the Union's army forces in the Department of the South on 15 March 1862. Prior to the Civil War, Hunter, who graduated from West Point in 1822, had served on the northwest frontier and had been a Major Paymaster during the Mexican War. Although he had some combat experience, his tactical abilities were limited. After the Union lost the Battle of Secessionville, which occurred on James Island, on 16 June 1862, Brigadier General Henry W. Benham, one of Hunter's subordinates, was relieved and placed under arrest. Benham, an 1837 West Point graduate, was an engineer, and not an infantryman. Although he was an expert at building coastal defenses, his ability to effectively lead men

in combat was poor. Later in the war, Benham was finally allowed to return to the Engineer Corps, and was given command of an engineer brigade. With little to show for the Union's efforts to capture Charleston, Brigadier General Quincy A. Gillmore relieved Hunter on 12 June 1863. After his relief, Hunter would wait until 1864 to get another command from which he was also removed after being criticized for a retreat.

Brigadier General Gillmore, an 1849 West Point graduate, was also an engineer. His career prior to the Civil War was rather uneventful. Before relieving Hunter, Gillmore had received acclaim for using his engineering skills to force the surrender of Fort Pulaski, which defended the harbor approach to Savannah. Although he was a skilled engineer, his leadership and tactical abilities were questionable. Officially, his capture of Fort Wagner on the northern tip of Morris Island was declared a success, and a major Union victory in the Charleston campaign. Yet, at the end of the campaign, he had little to show for his efforts with the exception of controlling Morris Island. Lacking any strategic understanding of the area or plan, his capture of Morris Island proved meaningless to the overall campaign. Following a stalemate after Gillmore's unsuccessful capture of Fort Sumter, Brigadier General John P. Hatch finally replaced Gillmore on 1 May 1864, and on 26 May 1864, Major General John G. Foster was assigned as commander.

Major General Foster, an 1847 West Point graduate, was another engineer, who lacked strategic and tactical experience. His career was similar to that of Gillmore. Although he had served briefly in the Mexican War, most of his pre-Civil War experiences had been at building Fort Sumter and strengthening Charleston's defenses. Foster was at Fort Sumter when it surrendered to the Confederates on April of 1861. He

was brevetted to Major for the distinguished part he played in the transfer of Fort Moultrie's garrison to Sumter during the Confederate siege. However, Major Robert Anderson, Fort Sumter's commanding officer, disputed Foster's gallantry in a letter to E. M. Stanton, Secretary of War, and recommended that two different officers be recognized instead.² From May 1864 to the Confederate withdrawal from the city in 1865, Foster would command the Union's army forces for this campaign.

The Federal naval forces had two different commanders for the campaign. The first commander was Rear Admiral Samuel F. Du Pont, who was chosen to command the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron. Du Pont was a professional naval officer, who had commanded several ships prior to the Civil War. His first command was during the Mexican War in the USS *Cyane* from 1846 to 1848. Due to his exceptional performance in command, Congress officially recognized him in a letter of thanks. His next command was the USS *Minnesota* in the Orient. When the Civil War started in 1861, he was a member of the Commission of Conference, a group of naval officers assigned to plan future naval operations.

Due to his experience commanding ships at sea during the Mexican War, Rear Admiral Du Pont had a good understanding of the Union navy's abilities, and the importance of joint operations to project power ashore. After analyzing Charleston's harbor defenses, he had already determined that the Union's naval forces would have a difficult time capturing Charleston without a joint and coordinated attack with the army. He realized early on that the Union's monitors did not have the firepower to inflict enough damage on Fort Sumter to force the surrender of the fort. Although Du Pont was tactically sound in his approach to warfare, he lacked the forcefulness, courage and

charisma to make the Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, understand his assessment of the situation. Following an unsuccessful naval attack, which he had been ordered to execute (and had predicted would fail), on Fort Sumter on 7 April 1863, the Union lost confidence in his ability to command. Rear Admiral John A. Dahlgren was then chosen to relieve Du Pont on 6 July 1863. Of all the Union commanders during the Charleston campaign, Du Pont was the probably the smartest, and most tactically proficient. If given the chance, it is possible that he may have come up with an effective joint strategy to capture Charleston.

Rear Admiral Dahlgren, on the other hand, was a poor choice to relieve Du Pont. Although Dahlgren was a professional naval officer, most of his career was focused on ordnance development, and not on tactical naval operations. Prior to the Civil War, he was famous for developing a whole class of new guns, which were appropriately named after him, the Dahlgren heavy guns. He also was involved in introducing howitzers for use afloat and ashore, and in developing ordnance procedures and doctrine. His only command at sea was of an ordnance practice-ship. He did, however, command the Navy Washington Yard in 1861, and was appointed Chief of Ordnance Bureau in 1862. Lacking practical naval experience, he was, therefore, not the best-suited naval officer to relieve Du Pont, making his appointment to command the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron rather mystifying. Many naval officers objected to his appointment, and questioned the Navy's decision. In any case, Dahlgren, despite being a poor choice and accomplishing little toward the capture of Charleston, remained in command of the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron for the rest of the Charleston campaign.

Along with the Union's military commanders, it is also important to examine the Union's civilian leaders, and the overall relationship between naval and army forces. The Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, and the Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, did not like one another. Their clash in personalities made it difficult for the services to work together. This affected not only the Charleston campaign, but also other operations in the Civil War that required navy and army coordination. President Lincoln would often act as a go-between for his two secretaries. At the heart of these clashes was inter-service rivalry. In the Charleston campaign, Welles, for example, felt that since it was a coastal attack, Union naval forces should lead the assault. This is one of the reasons that he ordered Du Pont to attack Fort Sumter in April of 1863. Service rivalry and personality issues at the highest levels of civilian command made effective joint operations and planning extremely difficult at the operational and tactical level. Unlike the current U.S. civilian leadership structure, the Department of Defense was non-existent during the Civil War, and, therefore, could not coordinate the various service secretaries. Moreover, there were no joint commands or staffs that could mitigate inter-service rivalries and personality conflicts between the upper leaders of the services.

Although the Confederacy also went through several commanders and had some leadership issues of its own, the South did a much better job selecting more competent leaders for the Charleston campaign than did the North. The first Confederate leader to defend Charleston was General Pierre G. T. Beauregard. He was initially responsible for the defense of Charleston, and it was he who led the attack on Fort Sumter in April of 1861. Beauregard graduated second in his class from West Point in 1838. Prior to the war, he had been an engineer officer during the Mexican War, and in January 1861 had

been assigned as Superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy. After his successful attack on Sumter, Beauregard was selected to lead other operations. Beauregard went on to take part in the Battle of First Manassas, and to command the Army of Tennessee during the battle at Shiloh after his commander, General A. S. Johnston, was killed. Later, he would be forced to withdraw his forces from Corinth, Mississippi.

On 21 August 1861, Brigadier General Roswell S. Ripley, an 1823 West Point graduate and former Chief of Ordnance for the U.S. Army, was assigned as the commander of the Department of South Carolina. Ripley's command was later folded into other commands, and by 5 November 1861 General Robert E. Lee had been assigned to command the Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and East Florida. Although Ripley would no longer be the overall commander, he would continue as a subordinate commander in the defense of Charleston. When Lee was ordered to Richmond, Virginia to become the principal military advisor to President Jefferson Davis, Major General John C. Pemberton was chosen to relieve him on 14 March 1861.

Major General Pemberton, an 1837 graduate of West Point, was a capable commander, but his ability to visualize the battlefield was not exceptionally strong. He had participated in the Mexican War, and had earned two brevets for gallantry during that war. Yet, he did make several questionable decisions, such as abandoning Cole's Island (Stono River inlet), and imposing martial law in Charleston, which caused many South Carolinians to distrust his capabilities. Following the decision to withdraw troops from Cole's Island, the South Carolina governor, Francis W. Pickens, mounted a campaign to have Pemberton relieved for incompetence. Pickens personally disliked Pemberton, and made it a priority to have him removed. Brigadier General Ripley also protested the

decision and worked with Pickens to have Pemberton relieved. The governor was successful in his efforts, and on 24 September 1862, General Beauregard was ordered to return to Charleston, and to assume command of the area's defense once again.

Pemberton's career, however, was not damaged and he went on to command the Department of Mississippi and Eastern Louisiana, a command that he held until the surrender of Vicksburg on 4 July 1863. After the Vicksburg surrender, Pemberton could no longer find a job commensurate with his rank, and he accepted a position as an artillery lieutenant colonel.

President Davis ordered Beauregard, who had asked not to go back to Charleston, to relieve Pemberton. Davis disliked Beauregard, and refused to listen to his request. Beauregard, on the other hand, had little choice but to accept the order since General Braxton Bragg had already replaced him as commander of the Army of Tennessee. While Beauregard was on an unauthorized sick leave, Davis had replaced him with Bragg. Although the reassignment may not have been necessarily intentional, the outcome was extremely beneficial to the Confederacy, and the defense of Charleston. Beauregard was a much better strategist than Pemberton, and he immediately started strengthening Charleston's defenses in preparation against Gillmore's and Dahlgren's attacks that would inevitably come in 1863. Having a better visualization of the various avenues of approach, Beauregard focused on filling the holes in Pemberton's defenses, especially on James Island. Following his successful defense of Fort Sumter in 1864, Beauregard was finally allowed to transfer, and Major General Sam Jones relieved him on 20 April 1864.

After relieving Beauregard, Jones would become responsible for defending Charleston until the Confederate withdrawal in 1865. Like all the other army

commanders previously mentioned, Jones was a West Point graduate, class of 1841. Prior to the Civil War, he had a fairly distinguished military career with participation in the Second Seminole War. During the battle of First Manassas, he had served as chief of artillery and ordnance. Not making any significant changes to Beauregard's defenses, Jones would continue defending Charleston until the city was abandoned in 1865.

Unlike the succession of Union commanders, who were relieved, only one Confederate commander, Major General Pemberton, was replaced for questionable performance and decisions, or for not accomplishing his mission. In the case of Pemberton, it was, however, more of a personality issue with Governor Pickens than a failure to accomplish his mission. Pemberton's decision, for instance, to withdraw from Cole's Island was based on reasonable judgment, and was not nearly as bad as those that led to the relief of his Union counterparts. Pemberton, and Lee as well, believed that the Confederacy did not have the capability to defend all coastal areas from Union naval gunfire. In Pemberton's opinion, the withdrawal from Cole's Island could not be avoided and would be necessary once Union ships started their naval gunfire attack; therefore, he decided to take the initiative and withdraw forces early, and reposition them further inland on James Island. Although his belief was probably incorrect, it was still based upon sound judgment.

The resounding question is why were the Union leaders so ineffective? On the surface, the army commanders, for example, appear suited for this mission. All of them were graduates of West Point. However, despite their education, they all lacked experience in planning, coordinating, and joint operations. Due to the complexity of this particular mission, the North, therefore, did not select the best officers. The Union

predominantly chose commanders who had an engineering background with little other skills or training. Gillmore, Benham, and Foster were all engineers with significant experience in building and designing coastal defenses; yet, they lacked any training in campaign planning and joint operations. The only non-engineer commander was Hunter, a paymaster, but he too lacked any planning or joint operational experience. Although it made sense for the Confederacy to utilize officers with significant engineering experience, such as Beauregard, to lead the defense of Charleston, it made little sense for the Union. The defense favored the use of officers with engineering experience to build fortifications, barriers, and defenses. The North, on the other hand, needed army commanders who could develop detailed operational plans and strategies. General Clinton in the Revolutionary War showed that joint operations and planning were necessary. While Clinton had the strategic, operational, and tactical experience to develop a joint campaign plan, the Union's army leaders had little experience in this area.

This is not to say that Union engineers were not necessary. Engineers, for instance, were important in providing insight into how to overpower and eliminate Charleston's defensive fortifications with proper placement of artillery. They were important in developing tactics to bypass or defeat enemy barriers. However, they should not have been in charge of the overall land operation unless they had more experience in planning, joint operations, and battle command.

The Union also did a poor job in selecting its naval commanders. The only exception to this is probably Du Pont. He had experience in planning naval operations. He had demonstrated his ability to handle battle command as the captain of several ships, and he also understood the importance of joint operations. With his experience and

training, Du Pont should have been able to develop a detailed joint campaign. He failed, however, because he did not have fortitude to convince his superiors of the necessity of a detailed joint campaign. Instead of selecting a better naval commander, or allowing Du Pont the freedom to implement more joint operations, the Union appointed Dahlgren as commander. Dahlgren was probably one of the worst choices that the Union could have made. Lacking any planning, operational, or tactical experience, Dahlgren was unable to visualize the battlefield or formulate any type of effective joint operational plan.

The Union's Unsuccessful Capture of Charleston

Unlike the methodical campaign plan utilized by General Clinton in 1780, the North did not have a coherent plan to capture Charleston. As shown in Chapter 3, General Clinton had utilized a detailed joint campaign plan with very specific decisive points. Clinton envisioned a naval attack on the harbor in conjunction with an envelopment of the city by army forces. He had determined that this combined campaign was necessary to overcome the geography and the city's defenses. The British campaign could, therefore, be divided into distinct phases and traced from one decisive point to the next. This was not true for the Union's attempt to capture Charleston. There was no overarching plan. With the exception of capturing Fort Wagner and Fort Sumter, there appear to be no decisive points. There was also no detailed strategy. Even if Fort Sumter, for example, was captured, the Union had no plan to proceed from that point. Lacking any specific planning or battlefield visualization, the North resorted to trial and error. This resulted in a considerable waste of time and resources as a succession of trial and error events occurred, such as the army forces fighting at Secessionville, the naval forces trying to capture Fort Sumter, and the army forces with naval gunfire support attacking

Fort Wagner on Morris Island. While General Clinton had learned his lesson in his failed attempt to capture Charleston in 1776, which caused him to develop a sophisticated joint campaign, Federal commanders would never learn from their mistakes, and would continue this ad hoc campaign to capture the city until the Confederates finally withdrew in 1865.

From 1861 to 1865 the Union's attempt to capture Charleston can, therefore, be broken down into a series of poorly planned events. Each of these events, or time periods, can be considered its own operation, with no relationship to any overall plan to capture Charleston. The time periods were sequential with one period leading to the next. The first one involved the Union's failed attempt to retain control of Fort Sumter at the outbreak of the war. Fort Sumter was considered critical in controlling the harbor. The second one involved primarily naval forces in the capture of Port Royal, sinking of the stone fleet at Charleston's bar, and the naval blockade of the harbor. The third period occurred on James Island at the Battle of Secessionville, and involved army forces. The fourth period involved a naval attack on Fort Sumter by Rear Admiral Du Pont. The fifth period was an army campaign, supported by naval gunfire, to capture Fort Wagner on Morris Island. Once Fort Wagner was captured, artillery and naval gunfire would then attempt to demolish Fort Sumter. The last period was a stalemate in which little military activity occurred with the exception of a bombardment campaign against Fort Sumter. When General Sherman's troops marched toward Columbia, and the Confederates decided to withdraw from Charleston, the last period finally ended.

First, the North's attempt to retain control of the harbor during the outbreak of the Civil War was the first major event or time period. On 20 December 1860 the delegates

from South Carolina met in Charleston, and passed the Ordinance of Secession, which stated that South Carolina was no longer part of the United States. Expecting political problems in South Carolina, the Union had already sent Major Robert A. Anderson to assume command of the Union's three harbor fortifications and the city's arsenal on 15 November 1860. It was hoped that Anderson would ease some of the tensions between the state and the Union.³ Anderson was the perfect choice to send to Charleston to help diffuse the tension. He had been born in Kentucky, and had owned slaves in the past. Although he was clearly loyal to the Union army, he was sympathetic to the South. His wife was also a southerner from a fairly well known Georgia family. Anderson had previously been stationed in Charleston, and his father had taken part in the defense of Fort Moultrie during the Revolutionary War. Despite his best diplomatic efforts and his personal appeal to the Charleston residents, he was, however, unable to prevent the city's newly formed militia from finally attacking the Federal installations under his command.

When Anderson took command, there were three primary harbor fortifications, and one arsenal that were critical in controlling Charleston's harbor. The three Federal harbor fortifications were Fort Moultrie, Castle Pinckney, and Fort Sumter. In addition to these three fortifications, there was one additional fort, which was Fort Johnson. At the start of the Civil War, Fort Johnson was in ruins, and had long been abandoned by Union forces. Fort Moultrie, Anderson's headquarters, was in bad repair requiring reconstruction and additional fortification. Sand dunes had drifted to the top of the walls allowing enemy troops to easily enter the fort.⁴ Most of Anderson's garrison of about 150 troops was located at Fort Moultrie. Castle Pinckney, on the other hand, was small, not well fortified or gunned, and contained only a handful of soldiers. Then, there was Fort

Sumter. Although it had been under construction since 1829, Sumter was only about eighty percent complete, and was not yet fully ready to be manned by soldiers.

Additionally, the majority of Sumter's large guns had not yet been installed. Lastly, there was the Federal Arsenal, located in the city and manned by several soldiers. It contained a large quantity of military supplies; yet, the arsenal was unusable because the city would not allow Anderson to remove any of the supplies, and he lacked the forces to prevent interference.⁵

With tensions continuing to rise and no relief troops, Major Anderson decided to move all of his forces from Fort Moultrie to Fort Sumter on 26 December 1861. Under the cover of darkness, he was able to move his forces without being detected by Charleston's residents. Fort Moultrie was abandoned, and its armament destroyed or removed. Prior to assuming command, Anderson had been given the authority to defend Charleston as he saw fit. His superiors had also acknowledged to him that he lacked the forces to defend all of the Union's installations in the area. Tactically, the decision to concentrate forces at Fort Sumter was sound. Fort Sumter had better defenses, and would be harder to capture due to the fact it was surrounded by water.

On an operational and strategic level, the decision to move to Fort Sumter was poor. There were several second and third order effects. Upon learning of the movement, Governor Pickens demanded that the Federal forces return to Fort Moultrie, a request that Anderson refused to obey. Pickens then ordered the immediate seizure of Castle Pinckney, Fort Moultrie, and the Federal Arsenal. Another effect was that it increased tensions in the area since the move was considered a hostile act, and caused the city's defenders to start arming the newly seized fortifications in preparation to attack Sumter.

Additionally, the city started rearming Fort Johnson, and building floating batteries. Another third order effect involved naval re-supply. In his decision to move, Anderson was thinking more like an army officer than a naval officer. From a joint operational perspective, it was more important that Anderson retain control of Fort Moultrie and Sullivan's Island than to move his troops to Fort Sumter.

Fort Moultrie controlled the entrance to the harbor, and any re-supply ships would need to pass closely by Fort Moultrie. While Anderson could better defend his troops tactically at Fort Sumter, Union ships would have an extremely difficult time getting past Fort Moultrie, which was now manned by enemy forces. This was clearly shown when Moultrie's guns helped repulse the unarmed, side-wheel steamer, *Star of the West*, which was carrying reinforcements and supplies for Anderson, on 9 January 1861.⁶ Upon learning of the *Star of the West*'s voyage to South Carolina, the city's defenders had rearmed Fort Moultrie, and had also set up a battery on Morris Island, which was manned by Citadel cadets. General Beauregard would later acknowledge the naval strategic importance of Moultrie over Sumter in 1863 when he had many of Sumter's guns moved to Moultrie during General Gillmore's campaign to capture Fort Wagner on Morris Island. Sitting in the middle of the harbor with guns from all sides able to attack it or prevent the advance of any re-supply ships, Fort Sumter was a poor choice to retain. Operationally, if Anderson could only maintain one fort, he should have chosen Fort Moultrie because the probability of Union ships being able to re-supply him on Moultrie was significantly greater than on Sumter. In these terms, Anderson's decision to abandon Moultrie was a critical mistake since it failed to take into account the added difficulty in his re-supply.

Although it is not certain that Anderson could have retained Fort Moultrie, it would have been better for future naval operations to capture Charleston if he had tried. Although his father served in Fort Moultrie during the Revolutionary War, Anderson underestimated the positional importance of Moultrie in controlling the harbor's entrance. While Fort Sumter was key in protecting the harbor, all ships still needed to pass closely by Moultrie first. If Moultrie had been retained, the North could have easily shut down the harbor, allowing no Confederate blockade-runners to pass.

Following Anderson's move to Fort Sumter, the Union made two attempts to send in supplies and reinforcements. As already mentioned, the *Star of the West* was the Union's first attempt, and was turned back as it approached Fort Moultrie. Originally, the Union was going to send the *USS Brooklyn*, but at the last minute the plan was changed to an unarmed vessel. This change showed the North's lack of understanding of the harbor defenses and geography. Anderson provided no assistance to the ship since he never received official word that the *Star of the West* was enroute. The Confederates had intercepted President Buchanan's communication to him detailing the ship's arrival. After this failure, and with Anderson running out of supplies, President Lincoln, who had now taken office, approved another attempt to bring in supplies. Under the command of Captain Gustavus Fox a group of naval ships left New York in early April 1861. Knowing that a naval relief force was on its way, General Beauregard decided to take action on 12 April 1861, and ordered that Anderson surrender or face bombardment. After Anderson refused to surrender, the bombardment of Fort Sumter began.⁷ During the bombardment, the Union's naval relief force finally arrived. After seeing the harbor defenses in action, Fox determined that he did not have the firepower or tugs necessary to

enter the harbor and re-supply Fort Sumter. On the bridge of the *USS Baltic*, Fox helplessly watched the bombardment of Sumter.⁸ After thirty-four hours of bombardment, Anderson finally surrendered. For their bravery, Beauregard allowed them to render full honors to the United States flag as they left. They were then transferred to the *USS Baltic*, which was stationed off the bar, for the journey back to New York.

With the departure of Anderson's troops, the first period in the campaign to capture / retain control of Charleston ended. There was no specific plan to retain control of the city. By not developing a campaign plan and employing sufficient naval assets in a timely manner, the North had missed a critical opportunity to retain control of key harbor defenses. Once lost, some of these critical harbor defenses, such as Fort Moultrie, would be difficult to retake. It would have been easier to retain them at the start of the war, than to retake them later in war. The reasons for this indecisiveness are complex. Buchanan and Lincoln may have been slow to take appropriate action because of their desire to avoid war. The Union also may not have fully understood that Charleston should have taken priority over other southern coastal cities. During the two attempts at relief, naval forces, for example, had been siphoned off to participate in other operations. If the difficulty in overcoming Charleston's defenses, once in enemy hands, were well understood, it would have made more sense to send ships and troops to Charleston as one of the highest priorities, and try at all costs to retain control of those defenses. The indecisiveness, lack of geographic understanding, and inadequate planning set the stage for the future events to capture Charleston.

Following Anderson's withdrawal from Charleston, a series of mainly naval actions can be classified as the second major time period in the Union's attempt to

capture Charleston. On 11 May 1861, the North began its formal blockade of the city by stationing the *Niagara*, a steam-driven frigate, outside of the harbor. By 31 May 1861 other Union ships, such as the *Vandalia*, joined in the blockade. The blockade, however, proved only partially effective with several Confederate vessels, such as the *Nashville*, running past the Federal ships and making it to sea. The *Nashville*, which had been in Charleston at the outbreak of the war for refit, had been seized by the Confederacy, and became one of its first warships.

Realizing the need to have a naval resupply location and support base for the blockading operations, the Union decided to secure Port Royal Sound, and occupy Hilton Head.⁹ Port Royal is about sixty miles south of Charleston. A task force consisting of fifteen warships and thirty-six transports was assembled under Rear Admiral Du Pont to capture Port Royal. With over 148 naval guns on the warships, and approximately 13,000 troops on the transports, the force was formidable. To defend Port Royal Sound, the South had established two forts, which were about two miles apart on opposite sides of the Port Royal Sound Entrance. On the southern side was Fort Walker, located on Hilton Head. On the northern side was Fort Beauregard, located on Bay Point. On 7 November 1861 Du Pont attacked Fort Walker with his naval fleet. After only about four hours of heavy shelling from the warships, the Confederate defenders abandoned the fort. The naval guns had proved effective, and had heavily damaged Fort Walker. Lacking sufficient ammunition and gun power to overcome the Union's assault, the Confederates had decided to withdraw from the fort. With the loss of Fort Walker, Fort Beauregard was immediately abandoned without any shots being fired from the North. The Union's army forces were then landed, and both forts and Hilton Head Island were occupied. The

capture of Port Royal is the Union's first major victory in the Civil War. Although Port Royal was important in any future operations to capture Charleston, it would appear that it was originally more associated with the requirement to establish a base to support the South Atlantic Blockading Fleet than to serve as a logistical base (similar to General Clinton's logistical base on Tybee Island during the American Revolution) to support army forces in any particular campaign to capture Charleston. In other words, Port Royal was not necessarily part of any specific detailed joint campaign to capture Charleston.

After the capture of Port Royal, Du Pont continued to focus on improving the effectiveness of Charleston's blockade. A fleet of over twenty-five obsolete whaling ships, known as the "Stone Fleet," were purchased by the Union with the sole purpose of being sunk in Charleston's Main Ship Channel. Loaded with stones, the sunken ships would block the channel, and prevent any Confederate ships from entering or leaving Charleston. On 18-20 December 1861, the North sank the vessels in Charleston's Main Ship Channel. Although the Union initially claimed success, within a week it became apparent that they were ineffective because the strong channel currents were already sweeping away the obstructions. Unwilling to accept failure, the Union sank another twenty ships, known as the "Second Stone Fleet," on 26 January 1862 in Maffitt's Channel between Isle de Palms and Rattlesnake Shoal. As in their first attempt, the "Second Stone Fleet" would also prove ineffective.

The third major time period in the North's attempt to capture Charleston primarily involves the Union's army forces with some superficial assistance from their naval forces. This event followed the sinking of the "Second Stone Fleet." This sequence of army actions focused on a series of small army skirmishes, reconnoiters, and

reconnaissance operations that culminated in the landing on James Island and the Battle at Secessionville. From their headquarters on Hilton Head Island, the Union forces began a series of skirmishes northward along the coast. After several skirmishes, the Union finally occupied all of Edisto Island, located about twenty miles to the south of Charleston, on 5 April 1862. It would appear that the Union did not have any specific plan of attack, but simply desired to continue to move forces north toward Charleston along the southern islands.

On 12 May 1862 Major General Pemberton, commanding the Confederate's forces in the area, disarmed Cole's Island, opening the Stono River to Union forces. As previously discussed, Pemberton believed that the Confederacy could not defend the coastal areas, and instead should concentrate on building a more inland defense system around Charleston. Although the decision to remove the forces was questionable, it was made worse by the fact that Pemberton had not yet completed all of the defenses on James Island before he ordered the disarmament of Cole's Island. On 13 May 1862 the Union received advance notice of the disarmament from the steamer *Planter*, which had been ferrying guns off Cole's Island. Robert Smalls, a slave pilot, along with the rest of the slave crew, had abducted the *Planter* on 14 May 1862. Going past the Confederate defenses in the middle of the night, *Planter* traveled out of the channel and past the bar, and into the hands of Du Pont's ships.

With the advance knowledge of the Confederate disarmament of Cole's Island from the *Planter*, the Union had the opportunity to seize the initiative and quickly assault James Island. Yet, like other periods during the campaign, the North was indecisive, and did not take any real action until June of 1862. The conditions for a deep inland attack on

James Island were set when Federal gunboats occupied the Stono River above Cole's Island on 20-21 May 1862. The importance in taking the initiative and seizing opportunities is one of the basic principles of warfare. The Union's inability to act when presented this opportunity may be due to its failure to have operational plans, OPLANs, available for quick implementation. This was further shown in a letter to General Hunter in which Secretary of War Stanton stated that Hunter had been sent to Hilton Head with the following orders: "Your instructions at the time of your departure did not require any movements against Charleston, but committed a large discretion to you, to be exercised on your own responsibility."¹⁰ It may have also been due to the inability to effectively understand the area's defenses and geography, and to identify and attack areas of weakness. The ability to concentrate joint forces and attack areas of weakness is also another basic principle of warfare.

On 2 June 1862, General Hunter finally decided to land army forces on the southwestern tip of James Island near the mouth of the Stono River. The initial landing was a success, quickly driving the Confederate pickets out of the area. Over twenty naval transports took part in the landing, and Union gunboats assisted by providing naval gunfire support. Gunboats in the Stono River and Folly River shelled Legare's Point and Secessionville. Before the operation began Hunter had tried to get additional transports and re-enforcements, which were turned down. The planning for the operation was questionable from the start. In a letter to Hunter on 19 June 1862, Secretary Stanton made the following statements:

Your letters of the 3rd and 22nd of April and 14th of May informed the Department that you designed to hold simply a defensive position unless re-enforced, and for that your force seemed to be considered adequate. On 30th of

April you were informed that no re-enforcements could be sent. The letter of the 31st of May was the first intimation to the Department that you had changed your plans and contemplated offensive operations against Charleston and Fort Sumter. The reasons for this change in your plans and what force you deemed requisite for success not having been communicated, the Department is unable to judge of their propriety. . . . It could not have been expected that a general of your experience would undertake at his own discretion, without orders and without notice to the Department, a hazardous expedition, with “fears of failure.”¹¹

Although unplanned and uncoordinated, the first major operation by the Union’s army forces to capture Charleston had begun. To coincide with the landing, the Union also made a demonstration against the Charleston-Savannah Railroad at Pocotaligo, located south of Charleston near the Coosawhatchie River. Union troops on Edisto Island were also ferried across to Seabrook Island, and then marched across John’s Island to join the other Union forces already on James Island. By 15 June 1862 Hunter had over 10,000 troops on James Island. General Pemberton, on the other hand, had only about 6,500 troops to defend James Island.¹² Although the landing was a success, the movement of troops further inland into James Island proved more difficult. From 3 to 16 June the campaign became bogged down in a series of skirmishes near Secessionville.

With his troops’ forward movement and progress halted around Secessionville, Hunter headed back to Hilton Head leaving Brigadier General Benham in command of the Union forces on James Island. Before leaving, Hunter gave the following orders to Benham:

In leaving the Stono River to return to Hilton Head I desire, in any arrangements that you may make for the disposition of your forces now in this vicinity, you will make no attempt to advance on Charleston or attack Fort Johnson until largely re-enforced or until you receive specific instructions from these headquarters to that effect. You will however provide for a secure entrenched encampment, where your front can be covered by the fire of our gunboats from the Stono on the left and the creek from the Folly River on the right.¹³

Not fully understanding his orders, Benham decided to make an assault on Fort Lamar. This engagement has become known as the Battle of Secessionville, which occurred on 16 June 1862. Benham decided that he could quickly overcome the fort, and conduct a *coup de main*. Although the attack was a surprise, the Confederates were able to regroup and repulse the assault. At the time of the assault, Benham commanded three divisions. The main assault was assigned to Brigadier General Isaac I. Stevens, who employed 3,562 men in the attack, and was supported by naval gunboats.¹⁴ The naval gunboats were only partially effective because the long range to Fort Lamar made the guns inaccurate.¹⁵

Benham's plan was extremely simplistic. It called for Stevens to use his division, which consisted of two brigades, two batteries of field artillery, a company of engineers, and a company of cavalry, to assemble before dawn outside the outer pickets of Fort Lamar, and advance quickly. He would then overpower the fort before the Confederates could man their guns. To support the assault, Benham assigned another division, about 3,100 soldiers, commanded by Brigadier General Horatio G. Wright to the rear and left of Stevens in order protect the flank. Another 2,500 soldiers were left to protect the base camps. The Confederates had only 700 troops to defend Fort Lamar. Although greatly outnumbered, the Confederates were able to hold the fort. The Union assault was a disaster. Benham lost an aggregate total of 710 soldiers, who were killed, wounded or missing.¹⁶ In comparison, the South had far fewer casualties with an aggregate total of only 204 soldiers.¹⁷ After learning of the failed assault, Hunter relieved Benham of command, and placed him under arrest for not following orders.

With little to show for his efforts and no further movement past Secessionville, Hunter decided to withdraw his forces from James Island on 4 to 7 July 1862. With this withdrawal the third major time period in the Union campaign to capture Charleston ended. This period focused almost entirely on using army forces to capture Charleston. There is no record of any attempt to conduct a simultaneous joint campaign utilizing naval forces to attack the harbor and divide Pemberton's forces. With the Confederate fortifications incomplete along James Island, Hunter's choice to land troops at the mouth of the Stono may not have been the most effective. It would have been better to land his forces further up the Stono, and attack the Confederate weak areas between Fort Pemberton and Fort Lamar. With his superiority in numbers, he could then have enveloped the forts from the rear. Moreover, he could have more effectively used the naval gunboats, which controlled the Stono River. With the swamps and fortifications around Secessionville, the location that he chose to attack was flawed. Little coordination or planning with Rear Admiral Du Pont was made for this campaign.

With the withdrawal of Union forces from James Island, the forth period in the campaign to capture Charleston commenced, and would end with Rear Admiral Du Pont's unsuccessful naval attack on Charleston on 7 April 1863. This time period focused primarily on the naval forces. Although there were some joint army and naval attacks/skirmishes that focused on severing the Savannah-Charleston Railroad (major line of communication to Charleston) at Mackey's Point, Pocotaligo and Coosawhatchie (located south of Charleston), the majority of the operations were purely naval in character. The naval forces continued to concentrate on enforcing the blockade, and challenging Charleston's naval defenses. On 30 January 1863, Confederate forces in the

Stono River, for example, captured the Federal steamer *Isaac Smith*. In an unsuccessful attempt to break the Union's blockade, the Confederacy on 31 January 1863 attacked the Union's blockading ships off Charleston's bar with two ironclad gunboats, the *Chicora* and *Palmetto State*. The Confederate naval attack disabled two of the blockading ships, but accomplished little else.

By early spring 1863, it had become apparent that little progress had been made in the capture of Charleston. The Secretary of the Navy, becoming impatient, decided that a naval attack on Charleston using the ironclad monitors would be effective in breaking the stalemate, and in capturing Charleston.¹⁸ The Navy Department incorrectly believed that the monitors could push past Fort Sumter, and enter into the harbor. The heavy guns from the monitors would then force the Confederate defenders to abandon their defenses and withdraw from Charleston. Du Pont, however, did not share their view. Du Pont distrusted the monitors, and felt that only a joint attack using army and naval forces could force Charleston's surrender, and overcome the area's geography and defenses. After performing his own tests on the monitors' ability to overcome Confederate coastal fortifications, he found that they lacked the firepower and firing rate to be successful. To test the monitors' guns, Du Pont had sent the *Montauk* to attack Fort McAllister on the Ogeechee River in Georgia. Although the monitor was able to withstand over forty-eight direct hits with minimal damage, the monitor's guns, on the other hand, could not do enough damage to Fort McAllister, a four-gun fortification, to force its surrender during four hours of continuous bombardment. In a letter Du Pont stated that "if one ironclad cannot take eight guns, how are five to take 147 guns in Charleston harbor?"¹⁹

One of the biggest problems with the monitors was their extremely slow rate of fire. The monitors had only two guns, a 15-inch Dahlgren and an 11-inch Dahlgren, in their turret. The guns were paired, and firing rate was limited by the 15-inch, which took seven-minutes to fire between salvos. Another issue, which reduced overall firing rate of the monitors, was the mechanical unreliability of their turrets. Despite their survivability from direct hits and ability to accurately hit land targets, Du Pont had shown that the monitor was not an effective warship to use against a thickly walled fortification.

Another problem confronting Du Pont was General Beauregard, who had been appointed as commander of the Confederate forces during this time period. Once in command, Beauregard had begun improving General Pemberton's harbor defenses, and the fortifications on James Island and Morris Island. Beauregard was a much better tactician than Pemberton, and, therefore, a more formidable commander. Beauregard had a slightly different view of Charleston's defensive system than Pemberton. While Pemberton had abandoned the outer coastal defenses on Cole's Island, for example, Beauregard believed in keeping the Union's troops as far from Charleston as possible. These ideas would later influence him to erect a new shorter fortified line from Secessionville (Fort Lamar) to Battery Pringle on James Island.

Despite his reservations Du Pont finally agreed to a naval attack on Charleston. On 7 April 1863 Du Pont assembled his ships off the bar, and commenced his attack. For the assault seven monitors, *Weehawken*, *Passaic*, *Montauk*, *Patapsco*, *Catskill*, *Nantucket*, and *Nahant*, were used. Du Pont also used the poorly armored ironclad, *New Ironsides*, which had 16 guns, as his flagship. The hybrid ironclad *Keokuk*, which had less armor than the monitors and non-moveable turrets, was positioned at the end of the

formation. In reserve outside of the bar, Du Pont had five wooded gunboats, which were the *Canadaigua*, *Housatonic*, *Unadilla*, *Wissahickon*, and *Huron*. Figure 17 shows Du Pont's alignment of the forces as they entered the harbor to attack Fort Sumter.

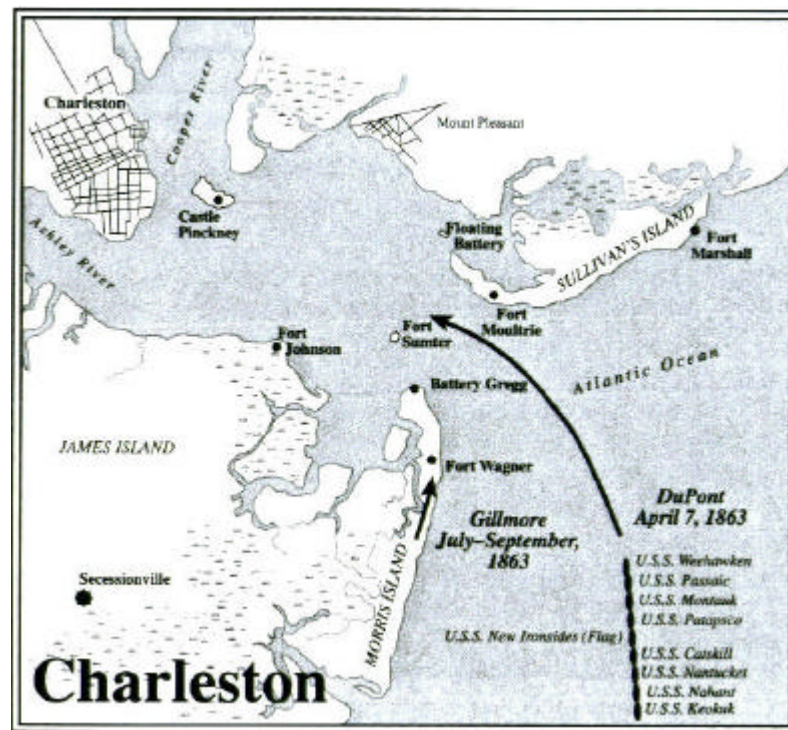


Figure 17. Du Pont's Naval Attack and Gillmore's Morris Island Campaign

Source: Spencer C. Tucker, *A Short History of the Civil War at Sea* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc. 2002).

Du Pont used a standard naval column formation for his attack. The formation was broken down into two divisions with *New Ironsides*, Du Pont's flagship, separating them. The first division was led by the *Weehawken*, and the *Catskill* led the second division. Du Pont's plan called for the ships to pass Fort Sumter, and attack the fort from its north and west sides. Next, heavy bombardment from the monitors would force

Sumter to surrender. Once Sumter surrendered, he would then focus attention on Morris Island. The wooden gunboats would be brought over the bar and would join the monitors in an attack on Morris Island's coastal fortifications. Yet, the plan did not go as envisioned.

As Du Pont had predicted, the monitors did not perform well in battle, and were unable to force Sumter's surrender. Unable to achieve a victory, Du Pont finally ordered his fleet to withdraw from the harbor. Another issue that influenced Du Pont's decision to withdraw was his encounter with mines. Although some of the mines were actually fake and were, therefore, used as deceptions to cause the ships to maneuver away, others were real. His flagship passed over one these mines near Fort Sumter, but due to Confederate problems in getting it to detonate, the mine never exploded.

The engagement lasted about two hours and thirty minutes. During that time period, three of the seven monitors were severely damaged, and the *Keokuk* was damaged to the point that she sank the next morning off Morris Island. Later, the Confederates would salvage the guns off the *Keokuk*, and use them in Fort Sumter and other batteries. The *Keokuk*'s guns became the largest guns to be used by the Confederates in the defense of Charleston. Despite the heavy damage to the ships, there were only twenty-three Union casualties, and only six Confederate casualties.

There were several reasons for the naval failure. While the ships were only able to fire 139 shots, mostly at Fort Sumter, the Confederates were able to fire approximately 2,206 shots at the ships.²⁰ During the battle several monitors had either mechanical or battle damage to their turrets that compounded the monitors' already slow firing rate. Lastly, there was also confusion as the ships entered the harbor causing several of them to

have minor collisions. Yet, the confusion issues did not contribute as much to the failure as did the inability of the monitors to inflict significant damage to Fort Sumter. Although the naval failure was not necessarily Du Pont's fault, Secretary Welles blamed him for the results. The failed attack was considered an embarrassment to the Union Navy. Official reports of the incident were kept from the public for over eight months.²¹ In Du Pont's official report, he stated the following:

The experiment was made and, in my opinion, sufficiently, thoroughly, and conclusively. That it did not succeed in capturing the forts and the city of Charleston is a matter of regret as keen and of disappointment as great to myself and to those who shared in it as can be felt by the Department or by the country. It was not, however, without important results, for it established anew the supremacy of artillery forts as against floating batteries and confirmed the truth of the opinions expressed by me in my previous dispatches that in all such operations to secure success troops were necessary. Had the land forces on this occasion been at all adequate to the emergency, the result might have been all the country desired. With the army in possession of the land approaches to Charleston, the attack from the sea could have been pushed to desperation, and the sacrifice of some of the ironclad vessels could have been properly made...in my opinion Charleston could not be taken by a purely naval attack.²²

During this period the Union's army forces were not totally inactive. On 28 March 1863, Hunter occupied Cole's Island and Folly Island. The Confederates had already abandoned both islands, and resistance to their occupation was non-existent. Anticipating that the North would occupy these islands, Beauregard had already begun fortifying the southern tip of Morris Island several weeks earlier on 7 March. During the naval attack on 7 April, Hunter watched from Folly Island. With no plan of attack after the Navy's failure, Hunter stated the following on 22 May 1863 in a letter to President Lincoln.

It is more than six weeks since the attack by the ironclads upon Charleston; an attack in which from the nature of the plans of Admiral Du Pont the Army had no active part. . . . I fear Admiral Du Pont distrusts the iron-clads so much that he has resolved to do nothing with them this summer, and I therefore most earnestly beg

you to liberate me from those orders to “co-operate with the Navy” which now tie me down to share the Admiral’s inactivity.²³

Rather than encouraging the development of joint plans and coordination, Hunter wanted to act by himself in an Army-developed campaign. In any case, with the unsuccessful naval attack, the fourth period in the Union’s attempt to capture Charleston ended.

The fifth period stretched from late April to early September of 1863, and focused on utilizing army forces in conjunction with naval gunfire to capture Morris Island, and force the surrender of Fort Sumter. Figure 17 shows the Union’s movement of forces northward on Morris Island. Two new Federal commanders, Brigadier General Gillmore, and Rear Admiral Dahlgren characterized this period. With the new commanders, a different trial and error approach was applied. It was assumed that once Fort Wagner, located on the northern tip of Morris Island, was captured, the Union, using bombardment from Morris Island, synchronized with naval bombardment, could reduce Fort Sumter to rubble and force its surrender.²⁴ Although naval forces were to be used extensively in the bombardment, they would basically play a supporting role for the army during the assault.

In terms of an overall strategy to capture Charleston, the assault on Morris Island was not detailed or comprehensive on what would happen once Fort Wagner was captured, and Fort Sumter was demolished. Although Gillmore did state in his official reports that once Fort Sumter was demolished “the monitors and ironclads would enter [the channel], remove the channel obstructions, run by the batteries on James Island and Sullivan’s Island, and reach the city.”²⁵ What would happen next was not specified. How the ironclads were to overcome the other harbor defenses was never stated in the official reports. Unlike the previous periods, the fifth period did have more coordination between

the Union's army and naval forces; however, the operations were not joint. There was no formal joint campaign.

General Beauregard considered Gillmore's Morris Island assault to be the Union's least dangerous course of action for the Confederates. Beauregard had examined five different possible Union approaches. Of the five he focused on three in particular, which were an attack on James Island, Sullivan's island, and Morris Island. He considered Morris Island to be the least dangerous while James Island to be the most dangerous. In his report on operations on Morris Island from July-August 1863, Beauregard stated:

The one by James Island was most dangerous to us, and the one which should be defended at all hazards; that by Sullivan's Island ranking next, and the one by Morris Island last, in point of importance, for the following reasons: An enemy who could gain a firm foothold on James Island and overpower its garrison (at that time having to defend a long, defective, and irregular line of works) could have erected batteries commanding the inner harbor at once, taking in rear our outer line of defenses, and by direct fire on the city compelled its evacuation in a short period, because in such a case it would become of no value as a strategic position, and prudence and humanity would alike revolt at the sacrifice of life necessary to enable us to retain possession of its ruins. The route by Sullivan's Island was also of great importance, for its occupation would not only have enabled the enemy to reduce Fort Sumter as an artillery fortress, but would also have given entire control of the entrance to the inner harbor to his ironclad fleet. . . . The remaining route by Morris Island was certainly the least injurious to us, for the occupation of the island by the enemy neither involved the evacuation of Fort Sumter, the destruction of the city by direct fire as James Island, nor the command of movements in our inner harbor by the iron-clad fleet. The Morris Island route I had long thought most likely to be attempted by the enemy, as proximity to Folly Island.²⁶

Beauregard's assessment of the situation was correct. Although Gillmore would succeed in occupying Morris Island, nothing significant would come out of his victory.

On 10 July 1863 Gilmore began his assault on Morris Island with about 3,000 troops crossing over from Folly Island. Four monitors supported the operation. During the assault Gilmore had conducted two demonstrations to mislead the Confederates on his

intentions on 10 July. The most critical demonstration was in the Stono and on James Island. According to Beauregard, “though the demonstration of the enemy in the Stono and on James Island was instituted to distract our attention from Morris Island, yet it was made in such strength that at any moment it could have been converted into a real attack of the most disastrous kind to us had the garrison been weakened to support Morris Island.”²⁷ By the afternoon of 11 July, Gillmore’s troops had reached Fort Wagner, and were repulsed with heavy losses. The North lost 339 troops while the South only lost twelve. Realizing the futility in his hasty attack, Gillmore began building a series of parallels in front of the fort. The first parallel, 1350 yards in front of Fort Wagner, was established on 13 July. On the morning of 18 July, monitors, gunboats, and shore artillery bombarded Wagner. By 7:45 in the evening, the Union commenced a major assault. As in the first assault, the Union was repulsed with significant losses. Over 1,500 Union troops were lost in the assault. In comparison, the Confederates only lost 174, who were either killed or wounded.²⁸ Learning from the disastrous assault, Gillmore decided to focus on bombarding Wagner into submission. Both naval and shore artillery were used for the bombardment. Additionally, a series of new parallels were established. On 23 July a second parallel was established 870 yards from Wagner. This was followed by an even closer parallel, 540 yards away, on 4 to 8 August. Throughout the assault Gillmore would continue to move his parallel closer as the battle permitted. On 11 August Beauregard formally abandoned the longer defensive lines on James Island for the shorter line from Secessionville to Battery Pringle.

By the middle of August 1863, Gillmore was concentrating gunfire not only on Fort Wagner, but also on Fort Sumter. After heavy shelling (about 5,009 rounds) from

shore and naval gunfire from 17-23 August, Fort Sumter was reduced to only one working gun (*Keokuk*'s salvaged gun).²⁹ Sumter had been heavily damaged. By 1 September Sumter had no working guns, and the Confederates were in the process of removing all the remaining guns from the rubble, and placing them at other locations around the harbor. Beauregard, expecting an assault on Sumter, reenforced it with infantry.

In early August Gillmore had started the construction of the Marsh Battery, later know as the "Swamp Angel." This battery, which was completed on 20 August, had a range of 7,900 yards that enabled it to shell Charleston itself. On 21 August Gillmore demanded that Wagner be abandoned or "Swamp Angel" would shell the city. When Beauregard turned down his request, Gillmore commenced shelling Charleston on 22 August. Although the shelling was ineffective in physical terms, it did have an effect on the city's morale due to the civilian casualties. Gillmore became one the first officers to use incendiary shells in a terror role against noncombatants.³⁰

After a fifty-eight day siege with constant bombardment, Gillmore was finally successful in getting the Confederates to abandon Morris Island. During the night of 6 September, the forces in Wagner were withdrawn. On 7 September Dahlgren demanded that Fort Sumter surrender. Both Gillmore and Dahlgren wanted to capture Sumter for their own personal fame. Each of them had developed their own plan using their own respective forces to seize Sumter.³¹ To complicate matters, the *Weehawken* had run aground between Sumter and Cummings Point on 7 September. To provide cover to the *Weehawken*, several monitors were sent in to engage Fort Moultrie and other batteries on 8 September. By the early morning of 9 September, Dahlgren was able to assemble his

assault force (before Gillmore had a chance to fully assemble his transports), and attack Sumter. Gillmore actually had his army forces in the water, but turned back once he saw that Dahlgren was going to make the assault first with navy forces. Neither Dahlgren nor Gillmore had coordinated their respective assaults with the other. For the assault Dahlgren used two columns of boats with marines onboard. However, he did not count on Beauregard's infantry re-enforcements on Sumter. The boats were repulsed, and the attempt to capture Sumter failed. Instead, Dahlgren lost 125 marines and sailors (most of whom became prisoners of war), and had four boats captured.³²

With Dahlgren's failed amphibious assault on Sumter, the fifth period ended. From 10 July to 7 September on Morris Island, the Confederates had 641 casualties, men wounded or killed. Fort Sumter had only 3 men killed and 49 wounded, despite being hit by 6,202 shells, which ranged from 30 to 300 pounds. The Union casualties, on the other hand, were estimated to be about ten times those of the Confederates.³³ Although Morris Island was now occupied by the Union, nothing else had been accomplished. Despite the intense bombardment, Fort Sumter still remained in Confederate control.

The last time period went from Dahlgren's assault on Sumter to the final withdrawal of Confederate forces in 1865. New sets of commanders were in charge during this period. Although Dahlgren still remained, the North replaced Gillmore with Major General Foster. The Confederates also replaced Beauregard with Major General Jones. With the exception of a series of major and minor bombardments on Fort Sumter, this period was characterized by inactivity. Despite the series of bombardments, Sumter remained defiantly under Confederate control. The Union army forces, for the most part, remained on Morris Island. There were several demonstrations and reconnaissance

operations on John's Island and James Island, but nothing of any significance. The naval forces, on the other hand, continued the blockade of Charleston. Unwilling to risk further damage, Dahlgren's ships remained outside of the harbor.

Joint Analysis

The failure to capture Charleston had nothing to do with a lack of troops. The North had more than adequate resources employed in the campaign. By 1863 the North, for example, had more than twice as many soldiers (about 11,500) on the ground attacking Charleston as the South had defending the city. This number only included army forces, and did not include the sailors and marines on the Union naval ships. The Federal army, therefore, had more than a two to one force ratio advantage over the Confederate defenders. In terms of sheer percentage, this force ratio, although large, does not appear to be overwhelming since more forces are usually needed to attack a well-defended area than those needed to conduct an area defense. What this force ratio does not consider are the long defensive lines that were required to protect Charleston. As discussed in Chapter 2, the South's defensive fortification system around the city was impressive. Yet, to adequately man all of these defensive lines and fortifications a fairly large number of troops was required.

In 1862 the South estimated that it needed at least 19,450 troops (15,600 infantry, 2,850 artillery, and 2,000 cavalry) to directly defend Charleston, and an additional 11,000 troops for the defense of the Charleston & Savannah Railroad and land approaches.³⁴ This estimate did not include nine light batteries, which was also included in the defense assessment. The Confederate First Military District, responsible for defending Charleston on 3 October 1862, had a force nowhere near this estimate. The district's forces consisted

of only 4,139 infantry, 1,787 heavy artillery, 727 light artillerists, and 410 cavalry.³⁵

When Admiral Du Pont attacked Charleston harbor on 7 April 1863, the total forces in the First Military District was about the same as in 1862. However, immediately following the successful repulse of the Union's fleet, the total forces defending Charleston was reduced to 5,841 troops (2,462 infantry, 2,819 heavy and light artillery, and 560 cavalry). This reduction occurred despite the objections by General Beauregard, who was ordered to send re-enforcements to Mississippi to support General Pemberton against a Union attack at Vicksburg. General Beauregard stated the following in a telegraph to James A. Seddon, Confederate Secretary of War:

Have ordered 5,000 infantry and two batteries to report forthwith to General Pemberton, leaving only 10,000 infantry available for the whole of South Carolina and Georgia. Cannot send more without abandoning the Savannah Railroad. Shall await further orders. Enemy still occupies in force Folly and Seabrook's Islands, also Port Royal. To reduce this command further might become disastrous.³⁶

With only about 6,000 troops at any one time, the Confederates lacked the forces to adequately man approximately thirty miles of defensive batteries and fortifications on the southern islands, northern islands, and harbor. During the Union attack on Morris Island, Beauregard recognized this problem, and shortened the Confederate defensive line on James Island from Secessionville to Battery Pringle to increase the effectiveness of his limited manpower. Another problem that further reduced the force ratio for the South was poorly connected interior lines. Interior lines are defined as the ability to quickly move forces from a central point to another point. While the geography was key to the defenses, it had a negative effect in that the swamps, rivers, and islands made it extremely difficult for the Confederates to reposition their troops to counter a Union offensive at a particular location.

By the end of 1863, the North had more than 22,000 troops available in the area.³⁷ This compared to less than 6,000 for the South. With the ability to concentrate their forces at weak areas, the Union had the advantage. They had a large naval force and a well-equipped army force. For all practical purposes, the Confederate Navy posed no real threat to the Union Navy. With the exception of the harbor, the Union Navy controlled the seas. They also had the forces to control the rivers, and to launch amphibious assaults. Yet, they still could not capture Charleston. If the failure was not due to resources, there must be other reasons for this outcome.

It is proposed that the inability of the Union forces to capture Charleston was mainly due to their lack of jointness, which was necessary to overcome Charleston's geography and defenses. Related to the jointness issue, there was also a lack of campaign planning. If campaign planning had occurred, the North would have seen the importance of conducting joint operations. The North's commanders were poorly skilled at battle command. They did not have the ability, as General Clinton did in the Revolutionary War, to visualize Charleston's battlefield, and develop an understanding of the geography. An additional problem was that the Federal commanders were not trained or skilled in the art of strategy. They lacked operational experience, and they lacked an understanding of each other's capabilities. This inexperience made their ability to coordinate joint forces more difficult. While General Clinton's campaign could be broken down in phases with specific decisive points, the Union's attempt to capture Charleston was ad hoc and fragmented. Once a specific objective, for example, was taken, there was no plan to proceed from that point.

Not having a detailed strategy or operational concept on how to capture Charleston, the North's campaign could only be divided into time periods. The first period, for instance, showed the indecisiveness and lack of understanding of the area's geography when the Union tried to retain control of the Federal fortifications. The second and fourth periods focused on the Navy. The third and fifth periods, on the other hand, focused on the Army. These periods were more often than not characterized by trial and error.

Operational centers of gravity are key when developing an effective joint operational plan. As discussed in Chapter 3, there were specific centers of gravity associated with Charleston. In the Civil War, these centers of gravity did not significantly change from those presented in Chapter 3 for the Revolutionary War. The center of gravity for the Confederates was still the area's geography. Therefore, it was critical that the Confederates protect and fortify any weaknesses in the geography. For the Union the center of gravity was the utilization of joint forces to overcome the area's geography. Unlike the British before them, the North was unable to operate jointly, or to develop a joint campaign plan. In comparison, the South did a much better job protecting its center of gravity than did the Colonials. As shown in Chapter 2, the Confederates developed an extensive defensive system of fortifications to help shore up any weakness in the area's geography. It is important to note that when comparing the Civil War and Revolutionary War, there was a complete reversal in the defenders and attackers supporting their respective centers of gravity. The British strengthened and utilized the center of gravity for the attacker while the Union did not. The Confederates, on the other hand,

strengthened and utilized the center of gravity for the defender while the Colonials did not.

¹Spencer C. Tucker, *A Short History of the Civil War at Sea* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc, 2002), 11-20.

²Major Anderson to E. M. Stanton, Secretary of War, Samuel W. Crawford, *The Genesis of the Civil War – The Story of Sumter 1860-1861* (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co, 1887), 471.

³Milby E. Burton, *The Siege of Charleston 1861-1865* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), 6.

⁴*The War of the Rebellion – A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 1, Reprint Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1890 (Harrisburg, PA: Historical Times, Inc., 1985), 4-5. (Hereafter cited as *AOR-No. 1*).

⁵*AOR-No. 1*, 5-6.

⁶P. C. Coker, *Charleston's Maritime Heritage 1670-1865* (Charleston: CokerCraft Press, 1987), 207; *AOR-No. 1*, 9-10.

⁷*AOR-No. 1*, 16-25, 30-35.

⁸*Ibid.*, 11.

⁹*Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series 1 – Volume 12 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901), 261-270. (Hereafter cited as *NOR-No. 12*).

¹⁰*The War of the Rebellion – A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 14, Reprint Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1890 (Harrisburg, PA: Historical Times, Inc., 1985), 354 (Hereafter cited as *AOR-No. 14*).

¹¹*Ibid.*, 354-355.

¹²*Ibid.*, 567; Burton, *Siege of Charleston*, 102.

¹³*Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁵*Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series 1 – Volume 13 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901), 104 (Hereafter cited as *NOR-No. 13*).

¹⁶*AOR-No. 14*, 63.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁸*NOR-No. 13*, 503.

¹⁹Du Pont to Benjamin Gerhard 30 January 1863, in Samuel F. Du Pont, *Samual Francis Du Pont: A Selection from His Civil War Letters*, 3 vols, ed John D. Hayes (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), 2:394.

²⁰Coker, *Charleston's Maritime Heritage*, 242.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²*Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series 1 – Volume 14 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901), 71-72, (Hereafter cited as *NOR-No. 14*).

²³*AOR-No. 14*, 456.

²⁴*The War of the Rebellion – A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 28 (two parts), Reprint Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1890 (Harrisburg, PA: Historical Times, Inc., 1985), 6 (Hereafter cited as *AOR-No. 28*).

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶*Ibid.*, 69-70.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 73.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 77.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 84, 22.

³⁰Chris W. Phelps, *The Bombardment of Charleston* (Gretna, Louisiana: Pelican Publishing, Inc, 2002), 28-32.

³¹*NOR-No. 14*, 611.

³²*AOR-No. 28*, 124.

³³*Ibid.*, 91.

³⁴*AOR-No. 14*, 64.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶*Ibid.*, 67.

³⁷Coker, *Charleston's Maritime Heritage*, 249.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Charleston's sieges provide historical insight into the impact of jointness on military operations. This historical case study clearly shows the significance of ensuring jointness on the battlefield. In order to overcome the geography and fortifications, a joint land and sea campaign was necessary. As shown by the North in the Civil War, army and navy forces, acting alone, could not capture Charleston. Only through a detailed campaign plan that effectively utilized both services could the city be taken. If jointness was critical to the operation, why was the Union never able to implement it? Officially, the North told its commanders that "cooperation" between the services was important, but in practice they never could achieve it. Why were the British able to see the importance in jointness for this operation when the North could not? What made the British capture of Charleston different? There are several factors that contributed to British jointness.

First, the key to understanding the need for jointness was battle command. In their capture of the city in 1780, General Clinton effectively exercised battle command. One of the major components of battle command is visualization. The ability to understand the terrain and foresee the battle is critical. The understanding of the terrain helped him see the importance of jointness. While Clinton was able to visualize the battlefield and plan a detailed campaign, the Union resorted to trial and error. First, the Federal navy would make an attempt, and then the army would make its own. This cycle would continue for the North until neither service dared to attempt anything by the end of the siege. Unable to visualize the battlefield, the Union also missed opportunities to attack Confederate

areas of weakness, and seize the initiative. Unlike the British, the Union, for example, was also unable to synchronize its battlefield elements, consisting of naval and army assets, in order to maximize their effects.

Second, the British were able to develop a detailed campaign plan to capture Charleston. The North, on the other hand, was never able to develop one. Effective campaign planning is a sub-component of battle command. Clinton's campaign can be broken down into a sequence of phases. Each of the phases had clearly defined decisive points. Not having conducted any detailed planning, the North did not know how to proceed from one particular objective to another. The Federal army and navy, for example, were unsure how to conduct their own operations, let alone coordinate with each other. Without detailed planning and coordination, it was, therefore, almost impossible for the North's forces to operate jointly. Campaign planning is critical for any military operation. It is even more critical when dealing with elements from different services.

Third, related to battle command and campaign planning, centers of gravity were important for the siege. In this particular case, the center of gravity for the British and the North was their ability to operate jointly. The center of gravity for the Revolutionary generation and the Confederates, on the other hand, was their geography and fortifications. For the British and Union, their center of gravity dictated the need for jointness. Clinton correctly identified this center of gravity and did everything he could to protect it, and to utilize it to the maximum. Like other mistakes in its unsuccessful capture of Charleston, the North was never able to identify or utilize its center of gravity. To make matters worse for the Union, the Confederates had learned the lessons from the

Revolutionary War, and did a much better job protecting and defending their center of gravity than the Colonials before them.

Fourth, the North selected commanders for this campaign that had little tactical, operational, or strategic expertise. Their commanders also had little experience in planning or conducting joint operations. With only a notional understanding of their own forces, it was inconceivable that they would have an understanding of another service's capabilities. Clinton in comparison had a good understanding of both naval and army operations. He was a strategist and an operational planner. With the necessary joint experience Clinton was able to develop a joint campaign.

Fifth, the British had a highly capable officer that acted as a joint-unifier for the army and naval forces. Captain Elphinstone acted as a bridge between Clinton and Arbuthnot. He successfully resolved many jointness issues. Having the technical expertise and respect of both commanders, he was able to mediate between the services over operational disputes. Likewise, he could convey ideas to both commanders without raising service rivalry. As a naval liaison officer for the army forces, he was crucial to the land movements and re-supply of the army troops. Elphinstone, who showed no service preference, was important to British jointness in this campaign. The Union had no such officer to fill this role.

Sixth, for this particular campaign, personality and service rivalry issues had less impact on the British than on the Union. This was the first campaign in which Clinton and Arbuthnot had worked together. Since this was their first operation together, there were no personalities issues, which would later plague the war between the two that detracted from the siege. Likewise, there was little service rivalry in this operation. Both

services had a role, and both understood the importance of their role. The same cannot be said about the North. The Secretary of Navy and Secretary of War, for example, had personality issues which directly impacted operations at the highest level. Neither of the two secretaries liked each other. They were often at odds with each other's policies. There was also intense service rivalry. This became apparent in Du Pont's naval attack on Charleston in April 1863. It was also shown when both Gillmore and Dahlgren drew up their own plans to take Fort Sumter, and each hurried to commence the assault before the other was able to take the glory.

Seventh, the capture of Charleston was more important to the British than to the North. General Clinton had determined that the capture of Charleston was key to splitting the colonies into two parts. Although the Union wanted to capture Charleston for political and economic reasons, it did not really consider Charleston as a major objective to ending the war. The North was more concerned with defending Washington, attacking Virginia, and conducting army operations in Tennessee and along the Mississippi and Tennessee Rivers. In comparison, Clinton considered Charleston's capture as a major element in his strategy of ending the rebellion. Having suffered a humiliating defeat in 1776 when he failed to capture Charleston, Clinton saw the need to develop a more coordinated and sophisticated joint plan with naval forces. He personally oversaw the operation by accompanying the naval and army forces on their transit to Savannah, and then to Charleston. Clinton risked the transfer of a large number of his forces from New York and New England to undertake his operation in Charleston. Therefore, because the British had more to lose by the failure of this operation, they were more willing and inclined to conduct joint operations. Although Arbuthnot did not follow all of Clinton's joint

planning, such as moving ships into the Cooper River to prevent the escape of the American army, he did act with enough jointness to enable the operation to occur with enough coordination to allow an effective attack by major forces both on land and at sea.

Lastly, the British were also able to operate more jointly in Charleston because their overall perception of the conflict was different from that of the Union. Due to the fact that the British were fighting a war not in their own homeland, the British army depended upon the navy for supplies and transport. Even though this relationship was strained, and commanders often questioned jointness, the army and naval forces were forced to operate more jointly because of the sheer nature of the situation. The Union, on the other hand, did not perceive that there was as much need for jointness in operations. Many in the Federal army considered the Civil War as a land war, while many in the navy considered their mission as primarily a blockade and intra-coastal river war. Therefore, because of the situation and perception of the war, it was more difficult for the North to develop effective joint plans in Charleston than it was for the British.

In conclusion, of these eight factors, battle command was probably the most important reason why the British were able to operate jointly. Effective battle command ensures that most of the other factors, such as planning, center of gravity identification, etc., occur. Yet, several factors, such as Elphinstone's role, and personality issues, were not due to battle command. Therefore, it is a combination of reasons that the British were successful in their jointness.

Recommendations

This historical case study shows the importance of jointness in ensuring success. One force worked together and succeeded. The other force did not and failed several

years later. Charleston's sieges, therefore, provide a historical example of what happens when forces operate jointly, and what happens when they don't. Despite the changes in technology, these lessons are timeless and universal. Even for today's military, they are essential and have modern utility. This case study provides a good medium in which to further educate the military and its officers on the importance of jointness.

GLOSSARY

Joint. This relates to the activities, operations, organizations, etc., in which elements of two or more Military Departments participate.

Joint warfare. This is “team warfare” requiring the integration and synchronized application of all appropriate military capabilities from different Military Departments; the synergy that results maximizes combat capability in unified action.

Jointness. It refers to the ability of the different Military Departments to act jointly, and to effectively employ joint warfare.

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